MY MYSTERY SHIPS

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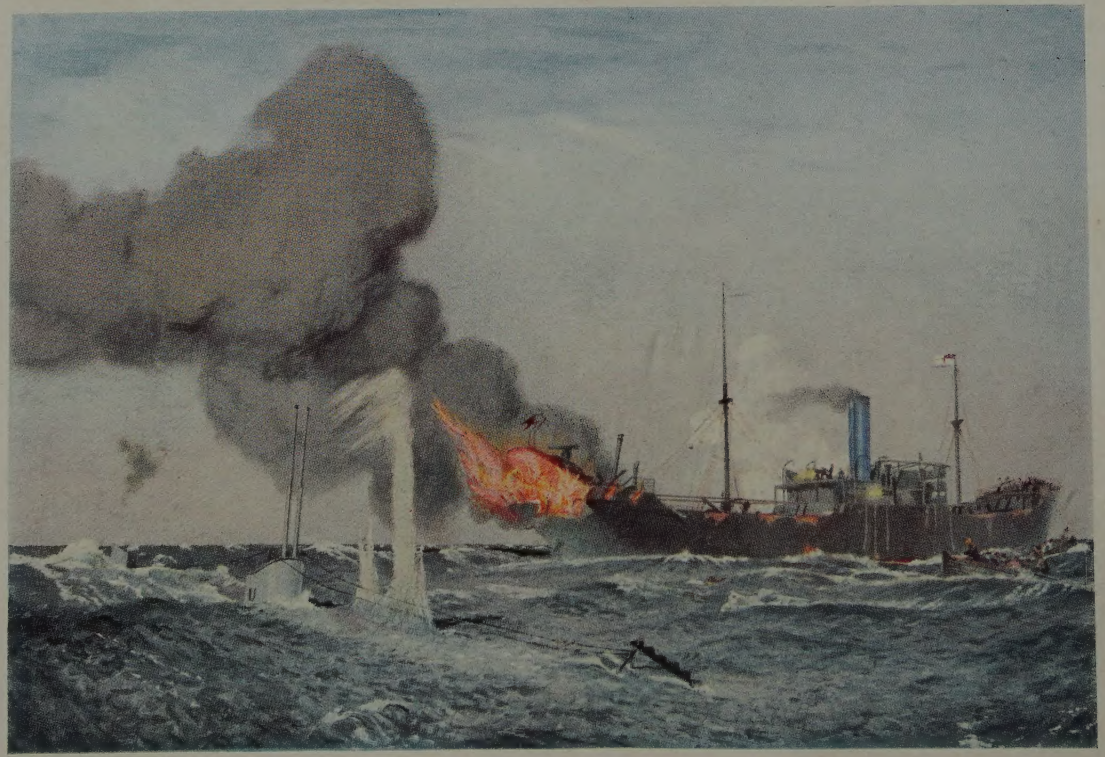
MY MYSTERY SHIPS



H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN" IN ACTION, AUGUST 8, 1917.

From an oil painting by Charles Pears, R.O.I.

MY MYSTERY SHIPS

BY
REAR-ADMIRAL GORDON CAMPBELL
V.C., D.S.O.

WITH A FOREWORD BY
ADMIRAL SIR LEWIS BAYLY
K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.V.O.

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TO

MY MOTHER

FOREWORD

By Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.V.O.

Perhaps one of the most dreadful sights in the war was the arrival on shore of numbers of women and children saved from a ship torpedoed by an enemy submarine. Half-clothed, wet and cold, many of the women did not know whether their children were saved or not, and many had lost all they possessed.

The situation was probably unique in history: two countries at war, each unable to continue the war if its sea communications were entirely cut off, and each country approaching exhaustion owing to the sea communications being severely lessened by enemy action.

But the methods of action in this respect were very different on the two sides.

England declared a blockade, seized all ships trying to pass the blockade, and sent them into harbour for examination; the enemy sent out submarines to sink all ships proceeding to their enemy's ports, leaving the crews and passengers to save themselves or drown.

Nations differ from individuals, in that a man may

be attacked, and, finding himself at the last gasp, will use every means that he has at hand to prevent his being killed. A nation, on the other hand, cannot be entirely wiped out, and if heavily defeated can sue for peace, and then, by everyone in the nation working together under wise government, can eventually rise to its former strength. There is, therefore, no excuse for the defeated nation to use inhuman methods with a view to becoming the victor in a war. If nations will not accept this statement when defeat looms close to them, then as science advances, and more terrible methods of killing and injuring people become possible, we shall see in the future a combat of devils, with all feelings of humanity cast aside.

And when a nation uses inhuman methods in war, the country opposed to it has to decide whether to hit back in the same way or to find other means of curbing and preventing these horrors, which if allowed to continue unchecked would cause the latter to lose the war, and to have thousands of its people killed or terribly injured for life.

The sinking of merchant ships by enemy submarines was a serious loss to England's fighting efficiency, and from that point of view was a fair method of attack by the enemy; but killing or injuring the crews and innocent passengers was inhuman, and roused the country to a pitch of righteous anger, as it did also other countries

(neutrals and allies) which lost their subjects in this style of so-called warfare.

It should not be inferred from these remarks that all submarine commanders were inhuman or brutal. They had their strict orders, and endeavoured to carry them out, but many of them did what they could for the people in the torpedoed ships by telling them the direction and distance of the nearest land, etc.

Thus England had to face an entirely new method of warfare, and to discover some means of combating it with success.

Curiously enough, although convoys were always used on the main trade routes during the Napoleonic wars, they were not introduced in the 1914–18 war until the loss of ships had become very serious.

In past days sailing ships making long voyages through waters where enemy ships were likely to be met were frequently painted to look like frigates, and were fitted with wooden guns ; and this disguise won many a ship safely through, as small cruisers dared not attack them. Commodore Dance in a merchant ship, with three other sailing ships in company, made such a brave show in the Indian Ocean that an enemy squadron sighted them and sheered off, thinking them too strong to be attacked.

In the 1914–18 war this system was reversed, and ships appearing like peaceful merchant ships, but with real guns hidden until a few seconds before opening fire, or more frequently opening fire the

instant the guns were disclosed, cruised on the trade routes hoping to encounter an enemy submarine so that they might attract her to attack, and then when the submarine came to the surface to sink her with her heavier armament.

And since the submarine was always ready to dive, even with the loss of some of her crew, who might not have time to get below before the hatches were closed, there were only a few seconds during which the disguised ship could get her screens down, her guns in position, and a fire opened. These ships had, therefore, to open fire immediately and to fire very accurately, a matter which necessitated a very great amount of practice beforehand, and a most rigid discipline, as one officer or man making a mistake would give the show away, in which case the submarine would at once submerge and then sink the ship with a torpedo.

Although there have been books written about mystery ships, as these disguised ships were called, giving a general description of the methods of fitting them out and using them, the real story of the life on board them and the thrilling stories of attacks on and by submarines have not before been told by one who played the principal part. This book describes with complete accuracy, and in a most interesting way, the life on board, and gives a full description of the discomforts, difficulties, and dangers of this method of fighting submarines, as well as the attractions this form of service had

for men of independent spirit, dauntless courage, and a very strict sense of duty.

Many people have thought that mystery-ship work was a species of buccaneering, enabling those on board to lead a sort of free-and-easy life, except while engaging a submarine or being attacked by one. Nothing could be farther from the fact: discipline and readiness for immediate action were as strict as that on board the smartest man-of-war, from the moment of leaving harbour until safe within the harbour on return.

At any moment at sea a submarine might be watching the ship, and one false step would lead to the ship being torpedoed, and those in her left to try to save themselves, or be taken prisoners, instead of the submarine being sunk had the necessary care been taken by everyone in the ship.

Submarines operating in British waters usually carried a man who had been a North Sea or Channel pilot, or who had served on board a British merchant ship, and who was, therefore, thoroughly conversant with the latter and its appearance.

These matters are all described by Admiral Gordon Campbell in his book—a book which will enlighten its readers as to the heroism, wonderful patience, and self-control shown by all who served in these mystery ships.

Admiral Gordon Campbell served under my flag in mystery ships from October 1915 to August 1917; starting as a Lieutenant-Commander R.N., he

ended that part of his career as a Captain R.N. with a V.C. and three D.S.O.s.

He had a genius for foretelling whereabouts a submarine was likely to be found, and what its further movements were likely to be ; a born leader of men, with a wonderful sense of his duty to his country, life and honours seemed to count nothing to him, provided that he could find and attack a submarine, and it is safe to say that, apart from his attacks, he created a moral atmosphere which caused submarines to be far more careful in attacking ships, and thus enabled many to escape. His difficulties were increased owing to his head-quarters (Queenstown, South Ireland) containing many spies doing what they could to damage England's endeavours, and where every ship and movement were closely watched. In consequence he was as careful not to reveal his activities when on shore as he was when at sea ; he kept from mixing with people in clubs or public resorts, and probably the only times he let himself go were at Admiralty House, where he frequently came for a rest. The only time we came near to a disagreement was when I told him that as a Captain R.N. at an exceptionally early age, with the honours His Majesty had given him, he must give up the dangerous game of mystery shipping and must take up the ordinary duties of a naval officer in war, as such an officer could not be easily spared from the country's service.

Foreword

Among the thirty odd mystery-ships' captains who served under my flag, he was the only one who could stand the strain of mystery-ship work for more than a year.

It is a very great satisfaction to me to be allowed this opportunity of drawing attention to the story of a very brave and able officer's activities against the country's enemies.

LEWIS BAYLY.

PREFACE

EVER since the war I have been asked from time to time to write a book or tell my experiences. I have refrained from doing so on many grounds, but two of my chief reasons for not doing so now no longer exist, owing to my removal from the Active List and the fact that ten years have elapsed since the war. I have now set out to tell in plain English and in my own words the experiences of myself and my crew in the mystery ships in which we served, giving an idea of why we set about the job, how we set about it, the general sort of life we led, and the encounters we had with the enemy, both successful and unsuccessful. I hope it will be remembered that I was only one of a large number of officers who commanded mystery ships, and the tale of each one would be of interest. It was not always the successful actions that called for most courage and subjected the crews to the greatest ordeal: it was frequently—as in my own case—that the unsuccessful actions called forth the best in men. Nor must one forget the mystery ships which sailed never to return, nor those which were torpedoed and sunk, with their crews subjected to the greatest ordeals in boats or on rafts, when only their magnificent perseverance saved them.

Preface

There are several books written which contain accounts of the various actions fought, and so I have only attempted here to describe my own experiences and thoughts, and in expressing what I think of the very gallant crew I commanded I am not unmindful of the fact that many another mystery-ship captain would say, and for similar reasons, the same of his.

Whether my book satisfies the curious or causes disappointment, I hope the various fantastic yarns which have been associated with my name will now be laid at rest.

I should like to express my thanks to Vice-Admiral Sir H. W. Richmond, K.C.B., who was, I think, the first British Naval Officer to propose mystery ships in the Great War, for the assistance he gave me with some of the historical quotations, and to various members of my old crew who have reminded me of incidents which I might otherwise have let slide, for, beyond my reports, I have had no diary to guide me.

GORDON CAMPBELL.

UNITED SERVICE CLUB, PALL MALL.
June 7th, 1928.

REAR-ADMIRAL GORDON CAMPBELL (1917).

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

THE SUBMARINE MENACE 1

CHAPTER II

THE U-BOAT PROBLEM 19

CHAPTER III

FITTING OUT, OCTOBER 1915 30

CHAPTER IV

ORGANISATION AND TRAINING 50

CHAPTER V

CRUISING, NOVEMBER 1915 TO FEBRUARY 1916 . 73

CHAPTER VI

HOW U.68 WAS SUNK 95

CHAPTER VII

ANOTHER ENGAGEMENT, APRIL 1916 . . . 113

CHAPTER VIII

CHASING A MINELAYER 131

Contents

CHAPTER IX

PAGE

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC 149

CHAPTER X

THE SINKING OF U.83 170

CHAPTER XI

H.M.S. "PARGUST," MARCH TO MAY 1917 . . 195

CHAPTER XII

THE SHIP WINS THE FIRST V.C. 213

CHAPTER XIII

H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN," JUNE TO AUGUST 1917 . . 232

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST ACTION 249

CHAPTER XV

THE END OF THE "DUNRAVEN" 270

SUMMARY 289

APPENDIX

EXTRACTS FROM SECOND SUPPLEMENT TO THE "LONDON GAZETTE" OF TUESDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER, 1918 . 296

ILLUSTRATIONS

H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN" IN ACTION, AUGUST 8, 1917
Coloured Frontispiece

FACING PAGE

REAR-ADMIRAL GORDON CAMPBELL (1917) . . xvi
CARTOON OF THE MASTER 32
THE "LODERER" 52
"PANIC PARTY" 68
REAR-ADMIRAL GORDON CAMPBELL ON BRIDGE OF "FARNBOROUGH" AT SEA, LIEUTENANT NISBET BEHIND HIM 76
H.M.S. "Q.5" AFTER BEING TORPEDOED AND SINKING THE SUBMARINE. THE WATER CAN BE SEEN BREAKING OVER THE SHIP'S STERN AND GUNHOUSE . . 184
H.M.S. "Q.5" AFTER BEING BEACHED, SHOWING THE APPEARANCE FROM THE BRIDGE AT HIGH WATER . 188
"Q.5" AFTER BEING BEACHED, BROADSIDE VIEW . 190
"Q.5" AFTER BEING BEACHED, BOW VIEW . . 190
"Q.5" AFTER BEING BEACHED. STERN VIEW, SHOWING GUNS BEING SALVED 192
THE MASTER AND OFFICERS OF "PARGUST." LEFT TO RIGHT: GRANT, LOVELESS, CAMPBELL, BONNER, BYRD. BACK ROW: ANDREWS, STUART, HEREFORD, NUNN, NISBET. 208
"THE SUBMARINE FINALLY SANK WITH A MAN CLINGING TO THE BOWS" 224
H.M.S. "PARGUST" IN DRY DOCK, AFTER BEING TORPEDOED IN THE ENGINE-ROOM 228
H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN," SHOWING SPLINTERS ON BRIDGE AFTER BEING SHELLED. REAR-ADMIRAL GORDON CAMPBELL IS SEEN WITH PIPE IN MOUTH AND LIEUTENANT HEREFORD WITH BACK TURNED. THE SPLINTERS ON LOWER BRIDGE DECK ARE AGAINST THE "ARMOUR" 268

Illustrations

FACING PAGE

H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN" IN TOW OF THE DESTROYER "CHRISTOPHER" 272

H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN," SHOWING THE AFTER-PART OF THE SHIP AFTER BEING TORPEDOED AND THE MAGAZINE EXPLODED. THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN FROM THE BOAT DECK, THE CREW BEING STILL ON BOARD . 276

REAR-ADMIRAL GORDON CAMPBELL AND CREW OF H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN" ON PAYING OFF. LIEUTENANT BONNER IS ON HIS RIGHT AND LIEUTENANT LOVELESS ON HIS LEFT 284

ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT

PAGE

DISGUISED AS WOMEN DOWN TO THEIR WAISTS . . 13

"FARNBOROUGH," SHOWING POSITION OF GUNS AND AS SHE NORMALLY WAS. 45

SHOWING THE VARIOUS DISGUISES WHICH MIGHT BE USED 45

MR. MATE AND THE CARPENTER GOING ON THE FORE-CASTLE TO ANCHOR 62

"A FIREMAN WOULD SHOUT TO BE SAVED" . . 66

FOUR MEN ADRIFT IN A BOAT 123

SPINNING ANY YARN THEY LIKED 126

"LAYING AT ANCHOR" 128

GETTING READY FOR ACTION 135

PLAN OF CHASING A SUBMARINE 139

"SORRY, SIR; THE PURSER HAS DESTROYED IT" . 163

"DON'T TALK SO LOUD; HE'LL HEAR YOU" . . 180

SUBMARINE BREAKING SURFACE 182

MANNING THE DUMMY GUN 206

"STILL AS THE DECK ITSELF" 207

PLAN OF "PARGUST'S" ACTION 220

DIAGRAM OF "DUNRAVEN'S" POOP INTERNALLY . . 236

PLAN OF "DUNRAVEN'S" POOP ON DECK . . . 237

"SO LONG, OLD COCK" 247

SUBMARINE SHELLING AT LONG RANGE . . . 269

H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN'S" ACTION 288

CHAPTER I

THE SUBMARINE MENACE

THE Great War produced many inventions, rapidly developed many weapons which were yet in their infancy, and brought into use forms of warfare which had either been unforeseen or only foreseen in the minds of men of great vision, who were generally ridiculed at the time for having them; just as now we have those who foretell how future wars will be entirely fought in the air and how whole towns and even countries will be destroyed by poison.

Before the war the submarine was a weapon which led to much discussion: some foretold how the Power that had submarines could destroy whole armadas; others said that the submarine was so vulnerable that a rifle-shot was all which was required to hit its periscope and destroy it! The fact remains that the submarine became one of the most, if not the most important weapon during the war, and what was called the Submarine Menace loomed very large in the many big problems of the war. Apart from other considerations, I don't think many people realised how far away from their base submarines could or would operate. I remem-

ber, one Sunday afternoon in the Channel, when on patrol in my destroyer, I received a wireless message that a submarine had passed through the Straits of Dover. This was one of the first war thrills we had had, and I passed the word round with a caution about an extra smart look-out, but I feel sure hardly a man aboard believed me. They only thought it was a scare to liven them up. The idea of a German submarine breaking through the Straits seemed too incredible to them.

What exactly was the Submarine Menace? The fact that submarines could, under certain conditions, such as daylight, calm weather, and within easy reach of their base, torpedo and sink men-of-war was well known; and it was also well known that if suitable precautions were taken, if ships steamed at high speeds or alternatively were escorted by high-speed vessels, then the chances of success on the part of the submarines were remote. Men-of-war may have been lost because speed was not available and escorts were not supplied, or for other reasons, yet this was but a reminder of the power of the submarine, and was not a menace to the country. If harbours had proper defences, such as patrol craft outside and booms at their entrance, then the ships could lie in safety and no submarine could enter. That important harbours were not so defended is well known, and the defect was remedied—rather late. On the whole, although something of the power of the submarine was realised, yet it was

under-estimated, and it is well known how the Grand Fleet of Britain had to leave its base at Scapa Flow because the defences against submarines were not sure.

I have no intention of entering on a discussion of International Law, nor, at this time of the Peace, the question of humanity, but for the purposes of this book it is only necessary to state as a fact that Germany decided to use her submarines to attack and sink our commerce, the life-blood of the British Isles, the source of supply to the Grand Fleet in the North Sea and our Armies in France. This was something entirely new. For long long years Great Britain had been dependent on her commerce, and as long as she is an island this must always be so, whether it be by sea or air. The protection of commerce at sea was a recognised part of every Government's policy—as it was essential to the very existence of our island. The protection depended, to a large measure, on cruisers to protect our commerce against other cruisers or armed liners and raiders. But here was something different: our commerce was subject to attack by an " unseen " enemy, to be sunk by a torpedo before any signal for help could be sent or any escape could be attempted; liners, tramps, fishing craft, men, women, children, were all at the mercy of an " unseen enemy." This, then, was the Submarine Menace.

The severity of the German attack on commerce

varied from time to time according to their policy. Starting rather mildly in 1914, it went through varying stages of intensity; sometimes "danger zones" were declared, at other times neutrals were to be spared; but eventually, on February 1st, 1917, the Germans declared what was known as the intensified submarine campaign, which meant, roughly, that any ship and every ship was liable to be torpedoed and sunk without warning. To show the seriousness of this menace, and without quoting a lot of statistics, one has only to look at the figures for April 1917—over 545,000 tons of British shipping were sunk, and together with allied, neutral, and fishing craft the total came to 875,000 tons. This was the worst month, but the sinkings had been going on since September 1914, slowly but surely, and it looked at one time as if the submarine would win the war, as it would have been impossible for the country to have continued to sustain such heavy losses of shipping. How was this menace to be dealt with? I do not intend to deal with all the many methods employed, such as mines, nets, auxiliary patrols, hunting flotillas, hydrophones, aircraft, depth charges, destroyers, submarines, and the surest and best method of all—Admiral Keyes's, when he blocked the submarines in at Zeebrugge so that they couldn't come out.

All the methods I have just mentioned were offensive ones, and set out to destroy the submarines, or to stop them coming out, which was the only

way of stopping the menace. But nearly all these methods, except our own submarines themselves, which of course could go anywhere the enemy submarines could go, were more or less confined to coastal work. This was good as far as it went, but the enemy submarines went farther—they were to be met anywhere between Archangel and New York, Gibraltar and Port Said—in other words, in waters too deep for mines and in areas too far afield for the auxiliary patrol, which did such excellent work during the war, to function.

Until the great step was taken of bringing in the convoy system we read so much about in previous wars, the merchant ships outside of coastal waters were practically dependent for safety on their own defensive armament. They might occasionally get a chance of ramming, but this was not frequent; and by zigzagging, making smoke from specially constructed smoke apparatus or smoke floats, or following certain routes, they could reduce their chances of being attacked. As fast as guns could be produced every merchant ship was defensively armed, and how gallantly they used their armament whenever they got a chance is a story in itself. The chances of a submarine being sunk by one gun, which was all a merchant ship carried, and this generally a very small one, were rather remote. In fact I don't think any submarines were actually destroyed by gunfire from merchant ships, the submarine always having the advantage of being

able to keep out of range, or alternatively to dive. The idea was therefore conceived of fitting merchant ships as men-of-war, with a specially trained crew aboard and a concealed armament strong enough to destroy a submarine if encountered. To all intents and purposes they would look like ordinary innocent merchant ships, and would therefore entice the submarine to them.

This class of ship went under various titles. Their real function was decoying, and the proper title would, therefore, appear to be " decoy ships," but it was not secret enough. The Admiralty in the early days referred to them as " special service vessels," and the ships themselves were known in the dockyards and so on as S.S. " ——." The fact that a number of people in and about the dockyards and naval ports knew that the Master of S.S. " —— " was a naval officer, that special guns and gadgets were being fitted, and that no one except on duty was allowed on board, naturally gave ground for them being referred to as " mystery ships," and I don't think for quite a long while that many people knew what duty these vessels were really employed on, although of course some must have suspected.

Towards the latter part of 1916 the Admiralty gave them all " Q " numbers, and they became Q-ships. This at once appeared to reduce a large amount of the secrecy of them, because, whereas " special service vessel " or " mystery ship " are

terms which have been applied to all kinds of craft, from battle-cruisers downwards, the term " Q " was only applied to " decoy ships," and, in consequence, nearly everyone knew that H.M.S. Q.1 was a decoy ship, just the same as they knew H.1 was a submarine. During the war " mystery ship " was applied to the " Glorious " class of ship, the dummy battleships, monitors ; in fact, everything new that had no details published, but whose existence was roughly known, became a " mystery ship," and might therefore be anything. It was the title I liked best, and is the one that is used in some history books referring to similar craft in bygone days. The " Q " title didn't last very long ; in fact, I only had to use a " Q " number for a few months, when names were reverted to ; but the mischief had already been done, and Q-ships became a well-known title.

It must not be imagined that the mystery ships were any invention of the war, as attempts to decoy the enemy are as old as can be. The hoisting of false colours is a long-standing practice, and it is only natural that enterprising officers would go a bit farther and disguise their ships and think of additional ruses. An illustration of this was the famous German cruiser *Emden*, with her false funnel and friendly ensign, when she made her attack at Penang.

Only a few years before the war, Lord Charles Beresford, when in command of the Channel Fleet,

deluded his own squadron at night by arranging the lights of his battleship to make her look like a merchant ship.

It may be of interest to refer to some more historical cases of the use of mystery ships, the chief difference being that in those I shall refer to the ships were built as men-of-war, and their Captains rigged them and acted so as to appear as merchant ships, and be good bait for the corsairs. In the Great War the mystery ships were either already merchant ships and fitted internally as men-of-war, or they were specially built to look like merchant ships.

In 1672 a case is recorded of a Captain Knevet, in command of the *Argier*, disguising his ship "by housing his guns, showing no colours, striking even his flagstaff, and working his ship with much apparent awkwardness," thus deceiving a Dutch privateer off Aldeburgh.

In 1799 we read of a Boulogne corsair coming up with what she thought was a powerful merchant ship; her appearance, the cut of her sails, and the way they were set all led to this belief. But as the corsair was running alongside, the batteries were unmasked, and she found herself up against a disguised cruiser with twenty-four guns.

In another case, in 1803, a French corsair was operating in the North Sea and came across an English ship, which aroused the Frenchman's suspicion by her shape and the appearance of her canvas. The Frenchman acted cautiously, and

discovered she was a brig trying to imitate a merchant ship to decoy him closer, so he at once made sail to escape.

In the Life of Admiral Mahan there is a letter he wrote as a midshipman in 1861 suggesting that a decoy ship be used to deal with the sea-rover *Sumter*. In order to reduce suspicion, he suggested that a sailing vessel be used for the purpose.

One of the most interesting proposals for mystery ships is contained in an unsigned letter which appeared in the *Naval Chronicle* of 1811 (vol. xxv):

"DEAR EDITOR,

"At a period when our commerce suffers such injury from the enemy's privateers, it is the duty of everyone, if he has any idea of a means by which this loss may be prevented, or materially lessened, to communicate it. Conversing with a person who had visited the Continent, he mentioned to me that, a few months since, he was accidentally at Boulogne, when his attention was drawn by several groups of people in earnest and melancholy conversation. On investigating the cause, he found that two of their privateers had that morning returned, one with a loss of twenty-eight, and the other of thirty-six men; that they had in conjunction attempted to board a merchant brig, which instead of being charged with their expected plunder was conveying troops of some description, who, rising unexpectedly, made that carnage among them.

"Nothing, my informant says, could equal the dismay and distress that prevailed among this description of people, and that some time elapsed before they could again man those vessels.

"I confess this information made a great impression on me, from its seeming strongly to corroborate an idea I had long entertained of the practicability, if not of annihilating, at least of greatly reducing the number of the enemy's privateers; and in the number so reduced, of producing that caution and delay which might possibly facilitate the escape of some of our vessels.

"The plan which has often engaged my thoughts is that two or three merchant vessels, having as little as possible the appearance of ships of war, or armed vessels, each having on board such a number of men as may be considered sufficient, well trained to the use of the musket and rifle, should be kept sailing on such parts of our coasts as are most infested by privateers, and that when attacked by the enemy under a conviction of they being private vessels, in their favourite place of boarding, our men (who might easily keep themselves to this period in concealment) might, without difficulty, give them such a lesson as that which the two privateers I have before mentioned received.

"The system of attack on privateers of the description that infest the narrow parts of the Channel, to be effective, must be by boarding, as in any other they might be kept in bay by a single 12-pounder.

" That some inconvenience may attend the execution of such a project I can conceive, but I am not aware of any at all commensurate with the benefit I should anticipate from it. This kind of service may be said to be full of hazard and danger, and that those engaged in it cannot be rewarded by the capture of the enemy's vessel.

" With regard to its danger, I think it would only have enough to take off the tedium of the service. I imagine it would not in reality be great. The vessel's bulwarks might be made musket-proof, and during the short period of attack our men would be engaged under so many advantages, that the hazard could not be of great consideration. To compensate them for having a miserable mutilated crew in possession of their vessel, they might be handsomely rewarded for each vessel repulsed that attacked them. As soon as it was conjectured that the enemy would be able to particularise the vessels in question, they might be either new painted or changed for others with little inconvenience."

It is curious how near to a description of our mystery ships in the Great War this letter comes.

It is quite obvious, then, that the idea of trying to decoy an awkward enemy did not originate in the Great War ; but whereas most of the previous examples appear to have been actions taken on the initiative of the officers commanding " on their own," during the Great War the mystery ship

became part of the Admiralty policy, though it is quite clear that the freer the hand given to an officer commanding such a ship, in selecting her, in fitting her out, and in his methods of fighting, so much the better. No hard-and-fast rules can be laid down, or text-books produced, as to the methods of fighting or the " bluff " to be used. It must be entirely in the hands of the Captain of such a ship. Secrecy was a matter of the most vital importance, and here again a Captain of a ship might think of some new form of decoying his enemy, but it was not always wise to let anyone outside of the ship know anything about it. A Captain, to carry out his intentions, might want a special class of ship or some special gadgets, and so it would appear the soundest scheme to select the officer considered suitable for the job and then let him find and fit his own ship with as much *carte blanche* as possible.

The German submarines' attack on our commerce included everything, from liner down to the innocent fishing vessel—nothing was spared. And some of every class of vessel were fitted as mystery ships in consequence: liners, tramp steamers, semi-passenger steamers, coastal steam colliers, steam trawlers, schooners, barquentines, ketches, smacks, luggers, and convoy sloops. The liner type of mystery ship only had a short life, as it was extravagant, and could not easily be spared for the service.

It was rumoured that the Captain of one of the

liner decoy ships asked for a party of extra men, as he pointed out it was necessary for part of his disguise to have some "ladies" as passengers. The reply he got was approval, provided the men were only disguised as females down to their waists!! Whether the yarn is exactly true or not, the idea is quite sound, as whatever you pretended to be had to be done thoroughly or not at all. In the same way a fishing smack should have a cargo of fish, live or dead, on deck to make her "smelly" and attract the sea-gulls, as one invariably sees the sea-gulls hovering round the fishing craft returning to harbour.

DISGUISED AS WOMEN DOWN TO THEIR WAISTS.

These mystery ships had a great advantage over the many other "anti"-submarine vessels, in that they could, except for the smaller type and fishing smacks, operate anywhere; and these, together with our own submarines, were the chief offensive

methods outside of coastal waters. It is true that the destroyers did take offensive measures outside of coastal waters, but unfortunately there were not enough of them. They were such a useful class of vessel that everybody wanted them, from the Grand Fleet downwards, and there were never enough to go round. In consequence they were generally tied down to escorting a particular ship or convoy. And I should think they were the hardest-worked ships in the war, for on them depended to a large extent the safe arrival of the great convoys in England and France. A disadvantage they suffered was that they did not carry sufficient coal or oil to allow them to stay at sea very long, but they had the great asset of speed, which enabled them to rapidly close the enemy and drop depth charges.

The sailing decoy ships, such as the famous ship *Prize*, a schooner of 227 tons, commanded by Lieutenant Sanders, V.C., R.N.R., were a very attractive type, as somehow or other a sailing vessel always looks such an innocent thing, dependent on the elements of nature to take her from place to place, sometimes making a fair speed and sometimes becalmed. The *Prize* was fitted with an auxiliary engine, which enabled her to get to the place she wanted to under cover of darkness without too much delay. But her very size and propelling power naturally limited her radius of action.

All types of mystery ships were necessary and

useful, but I think the most useful type of the lot were the good old tramp steamers, which could go anywhere, be seen nearly anywhere, and had a sea-going capacity of anything up to twenty-four days. They are the most common type of ship met with at sea, and, carrying as they do from 5 to 10,000 tons of cargo, they were just what the submarines most wanted. Every other type of craft, except the tramp mystery ship, had limitations to their sphere of activity. The liner would be out of place on certain routes, the smaller craft were naturally confined to certain areas, both by virtue of their calling and their stowage of fuel. Even our own submarines were hampered to the extent that arrangements had to be made for their safety.

In the early days of the submarine warfare mystery ships were used rather sparingly, and it was not till 1916–17 that they appeared in any large numbers, and by that time some of their usefulness had already gone. It is fairly obvious that if you are going to try deception on anyone, the greatest secrecy is necessary, and once you have been " bowled out," the other party is for ever suspicious. And so with the mystery ships (and I believe also, the Tanks), they were used in small numbers at first ; but owing to unsuccessful actions, the fact that we had mystery ships became known, and when produced in large numbers the best opportunities had passed, and success for the mystery ship became extremely difficult.

The first two mystery ships to be fitted out were the British ship *Victoria* and the French ship the *Marguerite*—both at about the same time, November 1914.

One of the great difficulties of mystery ships was to keep their existence secret, especially during the " fitting-out " period. This was perhaps not so difficult for the ships fitted out at Scapa by Fleet labour, as there was not a great deal of mixing with other ships ; but when it came to fitting out in a dockyard port in the South, it became a far more difficult matter, as I will relate later, it being obvious that a large number of people must be in the know.

A variation of what might be called the plain mystery ship was a combination of a mystery ship and a submarine, the two working together, with either the submarine actually in tow submerged and connected by telephone to the surface ship, or acting in company by a prearranged system of signals. The idea in this case was for the surface ship to attract the enemy submarine, and then, on communicating with our own submarine, the latter would go off and torpedo the enemy. This method secured the very first success of " decoy " on June 23rd, 1915, when the disguised trawler *Taranaki*, under the command of Lieutenant-Commander H. D. Edwards, was towing submarine C.24, under command of Lieutenant F. H. Taylor. They were cruising off Aberdeen, when a submarine

U.40 was sighted. Difficulty was experienced in slipping the tow, and eventually C.24 had to make his attack handicapped by having the tow-rope hanging from his bows and the telephone cable fouling his propellers, but he succeeded in torpedoing the enemy. This success was followed soon after by another on July 20th, 1915, when the trawler *Princess Marie José*, under command of Lieutenant Cantlie, R.N., was towing submarine C.27, under the command of Lieutenant C. C. Dobson, R.N. They met a submarine, and whilst the *Marie José* was engaging in action, C.27 slipped the tow and torpedoed the enemy submarine U.23.

The first success scored by a mystery ship on her own was on July 24th, 1915, by the *Prince Charles*, a small coastal steamer of some 400 tons, commanded by Lieutenant Mark Wardlaw, which sank her submarine off Roma Island. She was one of the vessels fitted out at Scapa. This was followed by two successful actions of the *Baralong* in August and September 1915.

At the time I started on this service in the *Loderer* there were only two of us for working in the Atlantic and approaches to the Channel, the other one being the *Zylpha*, commanded by the late Lieutenant-Commander Macleod. Two smaller ships joined a little later, the *Vala* (Lieutenant-Commander Mellin) and *Penshurst* (Commander Grenfell). This latter, a tramp steamer with the funnel aft, was one of the best mystery ships of the lot, but was unfortunately

lost in a gallant action when Lieutenant Naylor was in command.

All four of us were " tramps," the *Loderer* and *Zylpha* being ships about 3,000 tons and the *Vala* and *Penshurst* about 1,000 tons. The only survivor of this quartette was the *Loderer*, but they all played their part in helping to cope with the great menace.

In the following chapters I am going to give my own experience of this form of warfare, and although I have been able to quote here previous successes, yet I, at the time, knew nothing about them, and had only heard the vaguest yarns of " mystery ships " being in existence.

To find the inventor of " mystery ships " one must obviously go back to 1672, or even to the days when Eve decoyed Adam.

CHAPTER II

THE U-BOAT PROBLEM

BEFORE attempting to describe the methods employed to bring about the destruction of the enemy submarine by mystery ships, it is as well to explain briefly the former's capabilities, limitations, and their various methods of attack on merchant craft. Many types of submarines were used, differing greatly in size, radius of action, and other details. They were classed as U-boats, U.B. or U.C., and carried numbers, 1, 2, 3, etc. They all carried torpedoes, and they nearly all carried a 4·1-inch gun. The U-boats were the largest ones: they could go nearly anywhere, in fact were submarine cruisers, and eventually carried two 5·9-inch guns in addition to torpedoes. It was this class of boat which visited New York, Madeira, etc. The U.B.-boats were a smaller type which operated chiefly in the North Sea, and the U.C.-boats were those that mainly carried mines, which were laid around our coasts, but they also went quite far afield to use their torpedoes.

A torpedo, nicknamed a "tin fish," is a wonderful under-water weapon, running on its own power of

air and carrying a large charge of high explosive. It would be aimed at the ship, and if successful in hitting (depending on many details I do not intend to go into) it would make a hole some 40 feet square ; and in the case of an unprotected merchant ship would in all probability cause her to sink, according to her size, cargo, and build. The torpedo, travelling through the water some 10–20 feet under the water, would leave a bubble track on the surface. This, if seen in time, would frequently enable a ship to avoid the torpedo, as the torpedo once fired would (or should) maintain a straight course. Just as you can dodge a brick coming at you if you see it in sufficient time by turning one way or the other, so could a steamer dodge a torpedo. For that reason a submarine would fire from as close a range as possible, though he would have to be careful not to get so close as to run the risk of damaging himself by the resulting explosion or of being rammed, both of which sometimes happened.

The submarine has the great power of invisibility, which can enable her to make an unseen attack or to make a rapid disappearance if discovered ; but in her rôle of an unseen assailant she could only attack a ship with torpedoes, her sight being given her by the periscope, which would be above the water for such length of time as was required for making her attack. The periscope, by revolving it, enabled the submarine to see distinctly all that was going on around her ; but the officer looking

through it would only be able to look in one direction at a time. This is important to remember. A mystery ship, not knowing in which direction the submarine officer was actually looking, always had to assume he was looking in all directions. If the periscope was sighted, which would only be likely under ideal weather conditions, and a shot fired at it, the chances of it being hit were practically nil, as it only looked like a small spar sticking a foot or two out of the water, and even if a lucky shot got it, it made no difference to the submarine, as a second periscope was available.

Another form of attack was by gunfire, but to carry this out meant that the submarine would have to come to the surface and expose her conning tower and upper-deck casing, but not necessarily her pressure hull—the most vulnerable part. The target would still be very small and difficult to hit. On first coming to the surface, a submarine's conning tower would be closed, and probably her pressure hull would be just under water. The only target worth hitting would be the conning tower, and, unless hit by the first round or so, she would be able to dive in seconds and get away. Even if the conning tower was hit by the first shot, it did not necessarily destroy the submarine, as a watertight door at the bottom of the conning tower could be closed and the submarine remain watertight.

Before the submarine could open fire with her gun, it of course had to be manned, and this meant

that the lid of the conning tower had to be opened to enable the crew to get along the deck to the gun, and for this purpose she would have to come right to the surface. Now, this condition laid her more open to destruction, the target was a better one, a hit on the conning tower might prevent the lid being closed and the submarine submerging, and the confusion likely to be caused by the gun's crew rushing back and getting inside again would give the attacked ship a longer time to fire. Even under these conditions the hits would have to be obtained within a minute or so. A case occurred during the war where the conning tower had been hit, the Captain and others taken prisoners, yet the submarine managed to get back home, the lower door presumably having been closed and the men on deck sacrificed. This case will give some idea of the difficulty of actually destroying a submarine by gunfire.

A third method of attack a submarine could make on a merchant ship was to come to the surface, order the ship to stop, and then, after ordering the crew to their boats, bombs set with time fuses could be placed on board or the inlets to the sea opened. This, of course, could only be done if the ship was unarmed.

As this book chiefly deals with the submarine attack on trade outside the North Sea, we need only follow the proceedings of the U and U.C. types. It is sometimes imagined that submarines continually

cruised under water and seldom came to the surface during their voyages from their home ports to their ambushing positions. This is quite incorrect; in fact, they seldom submerged on passage, and never if they could avoid doing so, because we come at once to one of the submarine's great limitations, that of electrical power. Her means of propulsion when submerged are electric motors run off large storage batteries, which are extremely heavy and bulky for their power and life. In consequence, they are constantly requiring to be recharged, which necessitates the submarine being on the surface. When a submarine is submerged, it is almost impossible to get such a perfect trim that she will keep her depth without using the motors. Thus, unless the submerged submarine is lying on the bottom, she is constantly drawing on her vital reserves of electricity. When these are gone, she is compelled to come to the surface to recharge her batteries. Even when lying on the bottom—and this is only possible in certain localities and in fairly shallow water—a certain amount of electric current would still have to be used for lighting, cooking, and heating.

It will be seen, therefore, that a submarine would remain on the surface as long as she could, and on her voyage to and from her hunting-ground she would not be greatly affected by the limitations referred to, as she would always cruise at night on the surface and nearly always during the day. As

soon as she sighted anything by day, she submerged until the danger was passed. The exhaust gases from the Diesel engines are led out below the surface of the water, and cause practically no smoke to give her away ; on the other hand, the submarine could always locate a surface craft by the tell-tale smoke over the horizon long before she was herself sighted—always provided a good look-out was being kept. Thus it was practically impossible to deal with enemy submarines on passage from one place to another, if they wished to avoid detection, except by such means as mines, or in areas such as the Irish Sea and Dover Straits, when hunting flotillas could harass them and make them draw on their vital electricity.

It is true they were sometimes sighted when on passage, or their presence might be given away by the use of wireless ; but all reports of " sightings," especially of periscopes, had to be treated with a certain amount of suspicion, unless confirmed by something authentic, as it is extraordinary how many " periscopes " you think you see when day after day you are straining your eyes looking for them. Casks, wreckage, navigational buoys, whales, black fish, our own M.L.s and the American chasers—in fact, nearly everything was reported at some time or another as a " conning tower " or submarine.

The mystery ship's best chance, therefore, would be to cruise in the places where submarines were

operating, and not waste much time on an odd chance during their passages ; these places generally would be on the main traffic routes, the entrance to the English Channel, and focal points. When the convoys started—which meant nearly all ships had destroyer escorts on approaching land—it was advisable to get farther afield, but this will be referred to later.

We will now assume the submarine commander has got into the traffic, and he would probably have a fairly large area in which he intended to operate, as on each occasion of his attacking a ship, whether successfully or otherwise, he would know that signals reporting his presence would be sent out, which would have two effects, one to bring patrol craft to the spot and the other to divert other ships from the locality, so for these two reasons he would go elsewhere, to avoid being harassed and to have a chance of getting the diverted ships. For this reason it was no use a mystery ship going to a place where a submarine had been : you had to go on a track you thought he might be going to. When operating, he would still keep on the surface as much as possible, not only for the reasons already given, but also to increase his arc of visibility, but he would, anyhow in daylight, be trimmed ready for an instant dive. On sighting smoke, his first move would be, as before, to dive to periscope depth, about 23 feet. In this condition the whole of the boat, pressure hull, gun, and conning tower were,

of course, invisible, and the submarine could either raise one or both of his periscopes above the surface a few feet or lower them below it.

When the steamer came over the horizon, the first thing the Captain of the submarine wanted to discover was what she was, her course and speed. Unless the course of the steamer was going to take her fairly close to the submarine, there was no hope of getting in an attack by torpedo ; this was because the speed of the submarine when submerged would be very slow, perhaps not more than 4 or 5 knots, and he would want to get inside of 2,000 yards to fire. However, if things looked favourable and the quarry was coming well down towards the ambush, the submarine would manœuvre to get a few hundred yards away from the track the steamer would pass by, and then wait his moment. In the meantime the periscope would be raised for a few seconds at short intervals, to check the steamer's course and speed, as accurate knowledge of this was essential if the torpedo was to be sent off to hit it. The fact that the periscope had only got to be used for a few seconds at a time made it extremely difficult for the steamer ever to sight it ; and on the other hand, if the steamer was zigzagging, especially with a good turn of speed, it made it very difficult for the submarine to gauge the course. If all went well from the submarine's point of view, the torpedo would be fired when the victim was nearly at her

closest. A second one would probably be fired if the first missed.

It will be realised that a submarine might have to wait quite a long time before a ship was sighted that was on a suitable course and going at a suitable speed to enable her to get in a torpedo attack.

There were other objections to torpedo attacks. The number of torpedoes carried was very limited, so, if a submarine Commander depended entirely on his torpedoes, he would have had a long trip from his home ports to the Atlantic and back with perhaps very little to show for it, as by no means all the torpedoes that were fired made hits.

Another consideration for the submarine Commander would be that, especially as the cost of torpedoes runs into four figures, he would have to give an account of his raid on his return home, and if he had torpedoed a ship which had sunk at once, he would have no proof. The best proof to take home would be the ship's papers, and these could only be obtained by coming to the surface and taking them from the Master, who would be in the boats, or better still, unless the submarine was overcrowded, the Master himself could be taken. It will be brought out clearly later on in this book how this weakness of human nature always to want proof was made use of by me. In the event of him coming to the surface for this purpose, he would probably be in full surface trim, with his ballast tanks empty of water, and therefore in his

most vulnerable condition, one hit on the pressure hull being all that was required for his destruction.

The submarine attack by gunfire had the advantages that he would be on the surface, and therefore in favourable weather would be able to go at as good a speed as the average surface merchant ship, and could overtake the slow tramp and sailing vessel. If the ship was unarmed, there was nothing to fear, and it would be soon reduced to abandoning ship; if the ship had a defensive gun, it would then be necessary to keep out of range, and as the defensive guns increased in size so the submarine guns increased, and the large submarine which came out at the end of the war with their two 5·9-inch guns were a very serious problem. Had they come out earlier, defensively armed ships and mystery ships would have required 6-inch guns. By the time they did come out the mystery ships were nearly dead.

The last method of attack referred to—that of putting bombs on board or opening the valves—was, of course, the cheapest in every way, and was frequently used at one time. The submarine ordered the ship to send her papers over first, but as already mentioned, the submarine had to be sure the ship was unarmed, and it soon became obsolete except perhaps for neutral ships.

It will be realised from the foregoing that when the secret of the mystery ships became known, then the submarine had to think twice before coming up

to ask for papers or fire his guns, and the mystery ship's attempt to decoy him also became more difficult, which will be clearly brought out later.

The methods employed by the ordinary merchant ship when steaming alone, which were, of course, used as necessary by the mystery ships, were in the first place to attempt to ram, but this was only done if the submarine was definitely making an attack on the ship, and such opportunities were very rare. If the ship was unarmed, the only thing to do was to attempt to escape by steaming away, if possible head to sea, so that if the submarine followed he would have difficulty in firing. Even if armed, attempt at escape would be the best way to safety, as the submarine invariably had a better range than the steamer and most certainly a better target. Ships were also fitted with smoke floats and smoke apparatus, which in favourable winds facilitated their escape. But when the convoy system, which meant that ships sailed in groups under man-of-war escort, commenced, other methods of protection and safety were more readily available and the day of the mystery ships were nearly over.

I have attempted in these two chapters to describe briefly what we were up against and why the mystery ship again came into being.

CHAPTER III

FITTING OUT

October 1915

In September of 1915 I suddenly found myself out of a job. I had been Lieutenant in command of an old 30-knot destroyer, *Bittern*, and had been working from Plymouth, escorting, rescuing ships, going on wild-goose chases after submarines which frequently turned out to be black fish, and all odd jobs. At last one day we thought we had really met an enemy ship. She looked suspicious and refused to answer our signals. I therefore gave chase and told the chief engineer to get every ounce of power he could, with the result that we steamed back to harbour on one engine at four knots! The suspicious vessel turned out to be a new seaplane carrier doing trials, we had burst our engines, and had to pay off.

I had applied for a destroyer at Harwich or a gunboat in the Persian Gulf, anywhere that there might be some "scrapping," but a more exciting job was in store for me. Over a year in the English Channel, without sighting the enemy or smelling powder, had made me restless, and I had visions of the war ending without firing a shot. The idea was parti-

cularly galling, as we were continually escorting our gallant troops on their way to the fighting line and also seeing the wounded returning in the hospital ships. I was sent for at the Admiralty and asked if I would like to go in for some " special service," but was not given any details, except to be asked had I heard of the *Baralong*, and told that I should have to serve under Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly. Although I didn't know Admiral Bayly personally, I knew his reputation for being a man who understood war and would tolerate neither fools nor red tape—in fact, a man to serve under, especially in wartime. I had also heard faint rumours of one or two mystery ships in the Channel, and without a minute's hesitation I accepted the " special service."

I felt myself thoroughly fortunate, as I was fed up at the thoughts that the war would end before a chance of a " scrap " came. As I left the Admiralty someone said to me, " Well, Admiral Bayly will probably either make you or break you in your new job." What more could one want in wartime ?

My only instructions were to proceed to Devonport, where I would find a collier called the *Loderer*. On arrival at Devonport I awaited the arrival of the ship from Cardiff. She arrived a few days later, well filled with a cargo of coal. My first impression was, " Fancy commanding a thing like that ! " She looked at first glance thoroughly filthy inside and out, but she also looked a typical " tramp," and the more I thought of what our game

was to be, the more I got to like her and feel that she would be an excellent ship for the job. After her arrival I received verbal instructions from the Admiral Superintendent of the Dockyard to "fit her out," and had placed at my disposal three 12-pounder guns and a Maxim. I was given a free hand as to how I proceeded, and could ask for anything I wanted, except guns, which at this period were somewhat scarce. I think the independence of the job was one of the great attractions of mystery ships; it was not like going to a ship which is already built on a more or less standard pattern and carrying out a well-known routine. Here was something "out of routine," and every thought was directed to dealing with new problems, some simple of solution and some extremely difficult.

I don't think I was ever actually told I was to go "hunting" or "decoying" submarines, but my *raison d'être* seemed fairly obvious, and the less said the better, secrecy in a job of this sort being of vital importance, for if the enemy got to know of our existence and had a description of us, all attempts to decoy him to destruction would fail.

My idea, therefore, was to fit out the ship as a man-of-war, but with the outward appearance of an ordinary tramp steamer which would plough the ocean with a cargo of good things.

At the same time arrangements must be made so that as soon as the enemy had been decoyed to the required position, the disguise could be thrown off

CARTOON OF THE MASTER.

in a few seconds on the order " open fire " being given and the man-of-war revealed in deadly earnest.

Before starting I " took over " the ship from the Master, much to his disgust, as he couldn't make head or tail of it. It was naturally rather extraordinary to him suddenly finding a naval officer coming on board and saying he was going to take command of the ship. He was very sporting about it, and I think may have had an inkling of something of what was on, as after all it would obviously be some fighting stunt. He volunteered to remain and serve under me, but I declined the offer, as I thought it would probably prove uncomfortable for both of us, especially as he was no longer a young man. Before taking over I told him to send for the Shipping Master and discharge all his crew. As they had only signed on at Cardiff a few days previous, they were none too pleased either. The discharge of the crew and the taking over from the Master occupied a day or two, but it gave me time to look round and think out a few details. There was a certain amount of difficulty in taking over, as the Master had no detailed order from his owners about his stores, etc., and I had no authority to buy non-naval stores, especially provisions, from him. We got over most of the difficulties, as I was anxious to have everyone out of it and get on with the work. The chief difficulty was the ship's supply of wines and spirits, not a great quantity. Eventually I agreed to the Customs locking it up aboard with their seal

till the owners removed it. A few days later it was reported to me that some men working aboard were found drunk. I at once went to the lockers and found the Customs seals had been broken and several bottles removed. I, of course, would be held responsible, and after quiet inquiries as to what fine I was liable to, I bought all the stuff from the owners and entered it as one of H.M. ships.

The ship was the ordinary type of tramp steamer of 3,200 tons, 325 feet long, and a beam of 45 feet. Although not specially fitted to carry coal, she was loaded with over 5,000 tons of Welsh coal, and her Plimsoll mark was below that allowed for winter months. The fact that she was not fitted with ventilation for carrying coal was in due course to put us in rather a tight corner. She was a very old ship in every way, and her maximum speed was barely 8 knots. According to her official record, it was supposed to be 8·5, but that was many years previous. I was lucky in having for my First Lieutenant, or, as I now had to call him, Chief Officer or Mr. Mate, Lieutenant W. Beswick, R.N.R., of the Blue Funnel Line, who came on with me from my destroyer. He had a full knowledge of tramp steamers and was able to advise and help me in the many details of which the average naval officer is ignorant. I was also greatly assisted in this and my other ships by Mr. W. T. Mason (Constructor), Mr. Freathy (Foreman), Mr. Sitters, and a large number of other skilled and for the most part enthusiastic

men of Devonport Dockyard. And last, but not least, Mr. Oliver, of the Naval Store Department, who provided all the fancy stores and things we required. The ship's fitting out being a little out of the ordinary run of dockyard work at that time, I suppose more interest was taken in us than I had been used to.

The first decision to be made was the position of the guns, which were placed as shown in the diagram. The largest gun, a 12-pounder, 18 cwt., was placed right aft in a specially constructed house which represented a steering engine-house. A small steam-pipe was led aft from the real steering engine, which was amidships, and taken over the stern. This, with steam continually puffing out, added to the belief that the house contained an engine and not a gun. The three sides of the house were all hinged half-way down, and only the back or foremost end and roof were fixtures. The centre shutter was connected to the ensign staff, and so arranged that when the shutters fell, the ensign staff, together with any ensign that might be flying, automatically came down before fire could be opened. All the shutters were so fitted that they would have fallen outwards unless held up, so that by connecting a wire to them all and bringing it to a " slip " inside the house, all that had to be done when the order to " open fire " was given was to knock the slip off and the gun was in action a few seconds later.

There was one great difficulty in the building of

this house, as it had to be erected over the steering gear, which was a very old-fashioned chain arrangement. And the hand-steering gear had to be sacrificed altogether. Had I realised what we were in for, in the way of weather and the rottenness of the chains, I should never have agreed to it. At the time we could think of no better arrangement, and so the house was built, the floor being made movable so that at a pinch (which became necessary) we could steer with " relieving tackles."

It was essential to have one 12-pounder in the centre line of the ship, so as to give us a broadside of two guns each side. It would, of course, have been better still to have had all three guns on the centre line and had a triple gun broadside, but this was quite impossible, owing to the structure of the ship and the difficulty of disguise.

The other two guns, 12-pounders, 12 cwt., were placed on each side of the main deck, the sides of the ship being cut and hinged. The hinges were outboard, and had to be covered with rubber and made to look like a rubbing strake for going alongside a jetty. The ports were kept up by a bolt and pin, the guns being placed fore-and-aft against the ports, and, like the guns in the house, these could be brought into action in a few seconds, the risk being taken of keeping the guns loaded, with the offchance of firing into oneself. This arrangement again was a very poor one, but I was an entire novice at the game. The rubber on the

ports caused a lot of trouble and, apart from the action of the sea, generally got loosened after the ports were opened for gun practice.

When I say the arrangement was very poor, I am speaking from after-knowledge. As a matter of fact, they passed the test and sank two submarines, as will be related later, but the wheel-house and these gun ports would have given the whole show away any time after the middle of 1917, when mystery ships were well known. The Maxim gun was placed in a hen-coop on the boat deck near the funnel. The hen-coop, which was covered on top with light tarpaulin, was hinged half-way down, enabling the Maxim to be brought rapidly into action on either side of the ship. Together with the Maxim were also some rifles. As it happened, in February 1916, when at Haulbowline and before the ship had been in action, I was able to raise another couple of 12-pounder, 12 cwt., guns and two 6-pounders. Even history does not relate how I got them. The raising of a crew to man them was a more difficult matter. The two 12-pounders were placed on the upper deck, one each side in " cabins." The cabins were built on to the existing cabins and fitted with dummy scuttles or ports, which could be used as look-outs. They were built of steel, and the sides were hinged to fall outwards, the guns being close up to the sides as on the main deck.

The two 6-pounders were placed one each side of the bridge, the corners of the bridge being hinged

together with the bridge screens, and easily pushed aside before opening fire. These guns were the only ones which were visible to the ordinary person walking about the ship, and so had to be taken down in harbour or when a pilot was coming on board. One of the difficulties of fitting these guns in odd places, in a ship not built for the purpose, was the strengthening of the deck to take the mountings; and this point had to be taken into consideration in selecting the positions, as they had to be in place where you could get underneath fairly easily for the strengthening and supports.

The next consideration was messing accommodation and communications. The ship was in a filthy state when we took her over, and we had to take everything movable down and have the whole place fumigated, and a great number of articles, such as bunks, burnt, before I would allow anyone to live on board. The ship was only fitted to carry about 6 officers and 26 men, but eventually we had to find accommodation for 11 officers and some 56 men. The officers' quarters were immediately beneath the bridge, and a trap hatch was cut to enable speedy communication between the bridge and "saloon," and to avoid too many officers being seen on the bridge ladders. The engineer officers' cabins were near the engine-room, and the deck officers' near the bridge or guns. The stokers—or firemen—lived under the forecastle head as in an ordinary tramp; they had bunks instead of the usual hammocks

which the seamen had, and were fairly comfortably off.

On the main deck, under the officers' quarters, an upper cargo space was cleared and made into a mess-deck for the seamen ; this was connected by an alleyway through the coal the whole length of the ship. The guns on the main deck adjoined the mess-deck, and so were easily manned, but the guns in the " cabins " and the " wheel-house " and hen-coop had to be approached through the alleyway and up through trap hatches. This enabled all the crew to move about between their " action stations " and mess-deck without coming on deck and being seen.

Each gun had a good supply of ready ammunition, the reserves being in lockers on the mess-deck, always a source of danger in the event of being torpedoed or shelled. It was practically impossible to arrange for any supply of ammunition to the two 6-pounders on the bridge from the magazines (lockers), as it would be seen being carried up. So they were dependent on what was placed ready for use round the gun. In fact, this really applied to all the guns, as a submarine would almost for a certainty either have escaped or been destroyed before all the " ready-use " ammunition could be used. Every position in the ship was connected by voice-pipe with the bridge, and an electric bell at a later date was also fitted to give the " alarm." Telephones were suggested, but I decided to reduce

electrical gadgets to the minimum, and found voice-pipes and percussion firing more fool-proof and reliable. I was, according to my Admiralty scheme of complement, going to have no men with any special electrical knowledge amongst my crew, and I might have been badly let down if I had " break-downs " and no one to make them good.

The messes were made as comfortable as circumstances permitted, and as cleanliness is part of comfort, I had them well painted out and kept up to man-of-war standard. Smoking was allowed at certain times, but regular " rounds " were carried out. This meant that every morning and evening Mr. Mate would go round and inspect the living-quarters and everything had to be tidied up and cleaned. On Sundays I would do the inspection myself.

Although sometimes at sea the " rounds " became impossible owing to circumstances, I always made a strong point of them, both for the sake of discipline and the men's own comfort. The officers all messed together, unlike the ordinary steamer, where the Captain is sometimes alone and the Engineers have a separate mess from the deck officers, as, although the Frothblower had not come into being yet, I knew it was a case of " the more we pull together . . . " This was accentuated by the fact that, not being shown officially anywhere as one of H.M. ships, neither officers nor men received any share of the gramophones, books, clothing, papers,

etc., which kind people used to send the Fleet, and so we had to be entirely dependent to find and make our own recreations, which included a gramophone and quite a good concert party, which I thought a very good effort for a small ship's company.

As merchant ships of this type seldom had wireless in those days, it was therefore necessary to disguise the wireless aerial. This was done by having it fitted as an ordinary single stay or wire between the two masts, the feeder to the wireless-room coming down through the upper bridge like a pair of signal halyards, real ones being also fitted.

A sad calamity nearly happened through this one day, for I was only just in time to stop a pilot bending his pilot flag on to the " wireless " halyards, and as a message was being passed at the time he would probably have been electrocuted. Anyhow, it showed the disguise was good, and the pilot never knew what a narrow squeak he had had. A wireless-house had also to be built as near the bridge as possible, and so we put it under the chart-room, so that direct communication was possible for getting signals through rapidly. I was greatly helped in the wireless arrangements, which were of a novel type, by a man from Marconi's, Mr. Andrews, who had joined the R.N.R. and served throughout with me. He had already had experience on the East Coast which came in useful.

There were no proper store-rooms on board for

provisions, and these had to be kept on the main deck, nor ere there any heating arrangements or refrigerators. Inasmuch as the ship was employed in both hot and cold climates, it will be appreciated that she was not very comfortable. The only bath on board was the Captain's, and then hot water was only available when there was steam on the whistle (siren)!

Our ship's outfit was now nearly complete, except for some small depth charges, which were kept hidden away on trolleys ready to be run along to the stern and thrown overboard, a depth charge being a sort of bomb which explodes under the water at any reasonable depth it may be set to. These were a product of the war and naturally improved as it went on. The ones we had on this occasion were quite small, of about 100 lb. of T.N.T., but eventually they got to some 300 lb. They would have to be dropped very close to a submarine in order to destroy it, but the moral effect on a submarine crew of having bombs around it may easily be imagined, as the lights might be put out or the " trim " altered.

An example of this came my way later on in the war when I had a light cruiser in the Irish Sea. A submarine had appeared three mornings running, in exactly the same place in the vicinity of Dublin. I therefore concluded he was lying on the bottom, and going full speed across from Holyhead I sprinkled the area with sixty 300-lb. depth charges,

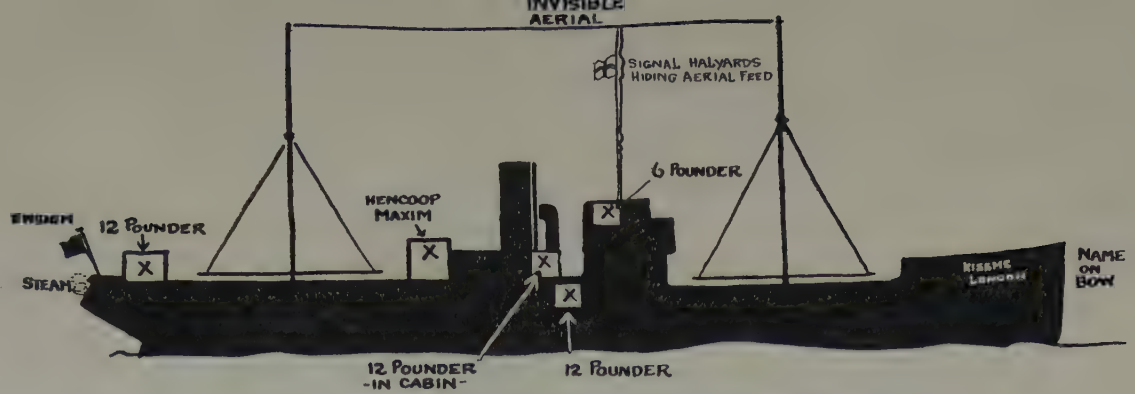
and the submarine started his homeward journey that night, having done no damage!

The ship was now fitted for cruising and fighting, but other things had to be thought of. To an experienced eye it is seldom that two ships look exactly the same: there is generally some slight difference even between sister ships; perhaps it is the rigging, or the arrangement of the boats or awning stanchions, and other small details. The importance of the point could not be neglected, as it was well known that a number of the German submarine crews were men of the Mercantile Marine themselves and had probably been English Channel pilots. Their seaman's eye would soon spot all the details of a ship. This had to be remembered and arranged for. I have already explained in a previous chapter how a submarine could see without being seen, and how his best chance of attack was near the focal points. It is, therefore, obvious that a mystery ship cruising continually in the same waters would soon arouse suspicion if sighted more than once, perhaps steering north one day and south the next. As one could never know definitely whether a submarine was in the vicinity or not, we always worked on the principle that we were always being watched during daylight hours; so, when working in the same area for days on end, the appearance of the ship was changed each night after dark. If the ship was on a steady course, say from Plymouth to Gibraltar, the disguise was not

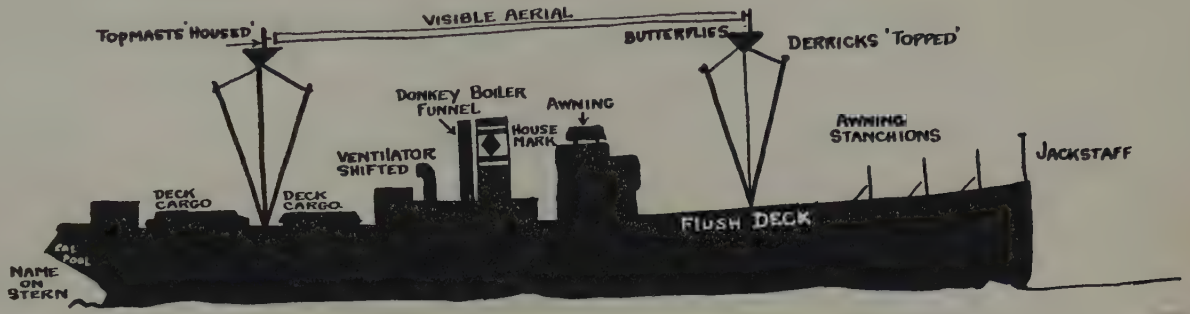
necessary except in the event of an unsuccessful action.

In the early days this was a comparatively simple matter, as ships displayed their own funnel and house marks ; so, with a good supply of paint and with ready-made frameworks of all shapes, diamonds, triangles, etc., we were able to belong to a different company each day, or as often as necessary. But in 1916 nearly all British ships were painted alike and showed no distinctive colour on their funnels, nor flew any ensign, so this disguise was of no further use.

Another fairly simple disguise was to fly neutral colours, a very old and perfectly legitimate *ruse de guerre*, provided the national colours are hoisted before opening fire. This disguise necessitated carrying the suitable ensigns, special lights for night, and big boards with the neutral colours painted thereon for fitting over the ship's side. During the late war, in which the submarine warfare against merchant ships was quite a new feature, the flying of " colours " was not sufficient, as it was frequently difficult for the submarine to distinguish them, and so most neutral ships had their colours painted on the ship's side. Consequently, if one was " representing " a neutral, the colours on the sides were necessary as well as the ensign. We therefore had these boards made, which fitted into slots on the ship's side. Canvas screens were also fitted rolled up above them and became



"FARNBOROUGH," SHOWING POSITION OF GUNS AND AS SHE NORMALLY WAS.



SHOWING THE VARIOUS DISGUISES WHICH MIGHT BE USED.

unfolded when the gun-ports dropped, so as to cover the boards before fire was opened. These boards also became a source of great trouble, as they were difficult to ship in the dark in bad weather and often got badly warped. Other alterations for which we prepared were to have all the stanchions, including those of the bridge, movable; we carried spare "dummy boats" which could be put in place or discarded. Spare ventilators, or cowls, were also carried which could be shipped in various places. The top masts were telescopic, and we could either be a stump-mast ship or a ship with a topmast. Spare yards and trestle trees were also carried, and could be put up or taken down, likewise a crow's nest. The derricks could be stowed in different positions. A large number of sansom-posts were carried which made the ship resemble very much a Blue Funnel steamer. Sidelight lighthouses to be placed on the forecastle were another useful help in disguise, and these, together with other minor ones, such as deck cargoes, rearrangement of life-belt racks, could be used either singly or in conjunction.

I have already mentioned how our aerial was an invisible one, but we also carried a visible aerial, like any other, which could be put up when sailing neutral or occasionally as a British ship. This would be a disguise that would be very noticeable, as whether the ship was fitted with wireless or not would invariably catch a seaman's eye.

One of the best " dummies " we had was a large wooden " donkey-boiler funnel "—a funnel that is frequently seen in a ship either just before or just after the main funnel. In our ship the real donkey funnel was inside the main one, so that our dummy one gave us three disguises : either we had none at all, or else in front of the real funnel, or behind it. It was naturally a pretty heavy affair, and took some getting " fixed." When not in use it was stowed along the boat deck.

I told one distinguished retired Admiral who commanded a " Q " sloop about our dummy donkey-boiler funnel, and he went one better. He had one made with a slit near the top and just big enough for a man to squeeze inside. The funnel therefore served a double purpose, as in addition to disguise a man was kept inside as a " look-out," and he was, I believe, connected with the officer of the watch by a bit of wire attached to his finger, so that as the officer walked up and down, the look-out got his finger pulled and couldn't go to sleep !

Another good disguise we had was to make the ship into a " flush-deck ship." In the plan it will be seen that there is what is called a " well deck " between the bridge and the forecastle. But by apparently building up the ship's side, which was done by stretching a bit of black canvas across tautly laced to a wire, this well deck was filled in and the ship looked a straight deck the whole length. This disguise could only be used in fine weather,

owing to the canvas becoming shaky otherwise ; but when used it was a great boon to the men, as it gave them an open-air recreation space. It had, however, its dangers, as one night when going into harbour a tug came alongside and the pilot was just going to step on to what he thought was a deck. Had he done so, he would have fallen some 10 feet. Without giving the show away, we told him that there was a brow ready for him farther aft.

All the disguises and dummies I have mentioned were assumed in a comparatively short time, sometimes an hour, sometimes a whole night. In addition to these more or less minor disguises we had ready a disguise of a major order, to be used (as it eventually had to be) in the event of an unsuccessful action when we were certain we had been seen. This disguise consisted of turning the vessel into a timber ship. We carried sufficient timber to board up the ship the whole way round ; and this, together with a coat of light grey paint, stump masts, and neutral colours, completely altered the class of ship. This disguise was also popular, as the timber was only outboard, so we could do what we liked inside without being seen. We also carried a motor-boat on board, which was often more trouble than it was worth, as it seldom " ran," and on one occasion caught on fire ; but it came in very useful for helping with disguises, as it could be stowed in different places, and we had a large crate, suitably marked, made to cover it entirely if desired.

Fitting Out

Having now got the ship fitted up with everything we thought we wanted—though we gradually found out we had forgotten many things and failed to foresee others—the next thing was to train and rehearse for what we intended to do. This I will detail in another chapter.

CHAPTER IV

ORGANISATION AND TRAINING

WHILST the ship was fitting out, one had to find time to study the ways and practice of the Mercantile Marine, as everything, anyhow outwardly, had to be done in accordance with that practice. This meant not only receiving long lessons from Lieutenants Beswick and Loveless, but also reading books and getting used to being quickly able to refer to Lloyd's Register and books of that sort. I arranged to be supplied with all the lists of sailings and departures of merchant ships, so that when we wanted to accurately represent a certain ship, we had some idea where she was. Organisation had also to be got ready for the crew. This included not only arranging for their accommodation, but also for their stations in action and when cruising.

Although there was little difficulty in getting deck officers, I was seriously under-manned for some time, being in two watches, there being only myself, Lieutenant Beswick, R.N.R., Lieutenant Jones, R.N.R., and an excellent young R.N.R. sub., Nisbet. The question of engineer officers was more difficult. I could have kept on the

ones in the ship, but they were unsuitable, owing either to age or other reasons. But I eventually unearthed at the Naval Barracks an Engine-room Artificer R.N.R., who had been Second Engineer Officer of the *Loderer* for two years. I asked him to come, and got him demobilised and given a commission as Engineer Lieutenant R.N.R.—rather a big jump, as it meant that from being a Chief Petty Officer he suddenly became a commissioned officer; but he more than justified my selection and eventually became Lieutenant Commander Loveless, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N.V.R. In order to carry out mercantile procedure, after seeing him at the Barracks I met him again at the Shipping Office in the Barbican, Plymouth, both of us in "plain clothes," and signed him on as Chief Engineer, commonly known as "Chief," and offering him certain wages which the Shipping Master agreed to, and I had Admiralty authority to offer; at the same time I signed on my Second and Third, Grant and Smith, both Scotchmen and worth their weight in gold. I had not known them before, and they had been sent down from the Transport Department.

It is commonly believed that the crew were specially picked; as a matter of fact they were drafted in the ordinary way, and as the duty on which we were going was kept very secret, I think the drafting officer thought the men were really going to an ordinary collier. I was certainly not impressed when I first saw my crew. There were fifty-six of

us all told ; this number was increased when I got the extra guns and some additional deck officers, and, of the first lot, myself and the ship's steward assistant (who looked after the men's food) were the only active-service naval persons, and I remained the only active-service naval officer throughout. I was lucky in having as the senior rating a pensioner Chief Petty Officer, G. H. Truscott ; he had been Chief Boatswain's Mate in some of the smartest ships of the Navy, and he became not only my Master-at-Arms and Chief Petty Officer, but a most loyal friend. I don't know what I should have done without him, as he was equally loyal to Beswick, and acted as a sort of go-between in the very difficult mixture of naval routine and discipline and tramp routine and (?) discipline which we had to carry out. He was cut out for the job ; a bit of a martinet he may have appeared to the crew at first, but he had great patience and tact in dealing with a very difficult and ignorant crew such as we started with. The gunlayers (three) were R.F.R. men, the remainder a variety of R.N.R., fishermen, R.N.V.R.—in fact, a mixed crowd. One, for instance, was a market gardener, another a commercial traveller.

On going through them, I found that not a man had ever steered a ship in his life, though one Irishman told me he could steer well enough with a tiller. This looked rather serious, and I was on my way up to the Barracks to see about it when I saw a

THE "LODERER."

man getting on in years sauntering about with a face like a seaboot, and I casually asked him if he had ever steered a ship. He gave me a look I shall never forget, spat on the deck, and asked me if I realised he had been Quarter-master in the *Titanic*, and was now " by rights " Chief Quarter-master of the *Olympic*. (He didn't tell me his chief duty was probably looking after the ladies' deck chairs.) I asked him if he would come on a " stunt." He came and remained with me till the end of the war, as Quarter-master and my servant in mystery ships, and then as my coxswain in light cruisers.

Jack Orr was his name, and I have never met a more typical handy man. He was a brilliant helmsman and an excellent servant ; the sort who puts your morning tea just out of reach, so that you either turn out and get it or go without. Hairdressing, tattooing, and carpentering were among his other qualifications. I never once saw him laugh during the three years he was with me. I tried hard to make him do so, but the most I could get was a faint smile combined with an agonised face.

We commissioned on Trafalgar Day, 1915, and the first thing was to rig ourselves up for the part ; the Admiralty, not to be denied a chance of displaying their sense of humour, were graciously pleased to allow each officer and man 30*s*. and 15*s*. respectively to " fit themselves out " with " plain clothes." This was eventually increased to £3 and 30*s*. ; and as we all not only had to wear worka-

day " plain clothes," but also go ashore in them, the allowance can hardly be called generous. Beswick and Truscott were deputed to get the outfit for the crew, and they would go ashore in plain clothes either singly or together and get two suits and caps from some store and then leave them at a convenient pub to be called for. The same sort of thing had to be done when we were at other ports, as it would have looked suspicious if men had gone ashore in naval uniform to buy plain clothes in war-time. Most men brought private things of their own from home to supplement the outfit.

This going ashore in " plain clothes " had its advantage as far as naval patrols and restrictions for men in uniform were concerned ; yet, at one port to which we went, the men complained that the girls wouldn't walk out with them because they were in " civies." One or two got attacked with white feathers, so we got permission to wear the Dockyard badge in our buttonholes, which said " On War Service." This led to a great deal of amusement at times. On one occasion, when at Pembroke, I was in my " get-up," had grown a moustache and no beard, and wearing my war service badge, which was commonly known as a " dockyard matey's badge." My own cousin, who happened to be there, didn't recognise me, and being in uniform himself was most indignant when I went up to shake hands with him and wanted to know who the —— I thought I was. My own rig con-

sisted of a reefer coat and a peak cap with a bit of gold lace wound round, and crossed flags in the centre. The bit of gold lace round my cap was a piece of gold lace from uniform trousers which I hired from one of the outfitters at Plymouth, on the plea of going to a fancy dress ball. Most of us grew beards or moustaches or both. I rather fancied myself with a moustache and no beard. Anyhow, by the time we were all rigged up we looked our part. Of course Beswick looked the best, as in addition to the fact that he lost his razor or didn't have time to shave three days out of four, he had a thoroughly worn-out reefer coat with a patch in the back; and to make him complete, the dog we had on board took a dislike to him and he had to find another patch for the seat of his pants.

It can readily be realised that the duty on which we were going was one that would require ideal discipline, as each officer and man would have a personal share in success or failure. Each man must not only know his job but be relied on to do it without supervision and in the direst extremity. By reason of the very mixed crowd with which we started, this question of discipline seemed difficult. I was practically the only one who had been brought up to "strict Navy," and most of the others rather thought that discipline was only associated with smart uniforms and spit-and-polish; whilst now here we were all, officers and men alike, in dirty

rigs, saluting and other marks of respect being conspicuous by their absence.

In addition to this, the ship itself had always to look the " dirty old collier." Now, it is well known that a dirty man-of-war is seldom if ever an efficient one, so this added to the difficulties, which were overcome by realising that our upper deck and outer appearances were only part of our disguise, whereas the living-spaces and gun-houses were our real selves and, therefore, clean. In fact, we combined an outward appearance of slackness with an inner soul of strict discipline. We were fortunate in that we had no King's Regulations and Admiralty instructions aboard to hamper us, and I was free to make my own regulations. We were only supplied with such codes and signal books as were essential for secret communications. None of the usual Fleet Orders, etc., were issued to us, and I only ran across one flaw in this arrangement. We happened on one occasion to be coaling at Devonport, about a year after we had been on the job, and I took the opportunity of sending Beswick up to the office to look through the cordite list for " destruction or return " as having become dangerous. He returned with the news that we had some on board that should have been destroyed some six months previous! We therefore quietly ditched it that night.

Obviously on the matter of discipline there would have to be a good deal of give and take, and the

mutual respect between officers and men necessary for good discipline and success must be earned, real, and spontaneous. I found that having a common officers' mess helped a great deal. We were a very mixed crowd and brought up under various different ways and thoughts. One fellow was a rabid Scottish Socialist, and we had many pleasant hours arguing with him or playing chess, and many years after the war he admitted he was no longer a Socialist. Another was the exact opposite and boasted much blue blood, was quite upset that he couldn't dress for dinner, but nothing could stop him wearing his beautiful silk pyjamas !

We eventually became a very happy mess, but it was not too easy at first. Our first bone of contention was of course the matter of how to feed. We appointed a mess caterer, and I suggested that our first meal aboard at Plymouth—breakfast—should be a specially attractive one. It was certainly solid, but not attractive, as I found myself faced at 7 a.m. with a large plate of steak, onions, and potatoes ! I suggested boiled eggs or a bit of fish might be more suitable if obtainable and when in harbour : some agreed and some didn't ; none of us thought that the time was to come when we should be grateful for anything. Anyhow, steak versus fish for breakfast became such an important matter, we asked Nisbett, as being our youngest member, to take on the catering, which he did remarkably well for nearly two years : we

" messed " well, and he had the tact to keep us all fully satisfied.

The best training-ground for seamen is at sea, and I early made up my mind that we should spend as much time at sea and as little in harbour as possible. Since our hunting-ground was to be the Atlantic, the season winter, and our ship an old one, older than I ever guessed, I knew that any " wasters " would soon show themselves, and could be returned whence they came. A small part of the coal-deck became my quarter-deck, where, out of sight of the world, we held our Divisions, Prayers and Quarters, and Divine Service. I also saw defaulters and request-men here in accordance with the custom of the Navy ; but this was the only part of the ship where " strict Navy " was carried out with those essentials which I considered necessary. Although heinous naval offences, such as " spitting on the deck," putting " dirty fingers on paintwork," " hanging washed clothes all over the place," etc., etc., were encouraged, yet anything affecting the real fighting efficiency of the ship was dealt with by great severity. The living-spaces had also to be kept scrupulously clean, the " spitting," etc., only taking place when the crew were lounging about the ship's side for the benefit of anyone watching our tramp steamer.

On first mustering my crew, I explained our game, and I especially emphasised the fact (which I will say more about later) that success depended on

each individual, and that any one man could spoil the show. I also pointed out that although for ordinary routine it was necessary to have different branches, as soon as the " alarm " was sounded indicating the enemy in sight, we were all combatant and executive, and there would be no non-executive branch.

The Engineer officers had charge of guns and rifles, and, although a little shy of it at first (this being the sort of thin end of the wedge of naval discipline), they soon tumbled to it, so there was no stopping them. The wireless ratings, supply branch, carpenter, stewards, and cooks all had their " action " stations wherever they might be required. Later on I was joined by a Purser (Paymaster-Lieutenant R. Nunn, R.N.R.) and a Surgeon Probationer, Byrd ; the former had come home from a bank in Buenos Aires to join the London Scottish, but fell for the sea, and became Control Officer ; but the latter was more of a difficulty as a " combatant." I solved the problem by " putting him in charge " of one of the " panic party " boats, ready to rescue and succour prisoners !

The fact that we were all new to this particular form of warfare, and also that a large number of the crew hardly knew port from starboard, was a great help, as one was able to start at the beginning. I am afraid the stewards and cooks were for a long time a source of trouble ; I think probably because some of the men who volunteered as such didn't

realise there was fighting attached to the job. We had two desertions from this branch, and another who " selected " three months' hard labour in preference to going to sea after the first trip. The " character " amongst this branch was our Chief Steward, who saw us through from beginning to end, an excellent steward and a keen fighter, but he had a great failing of sometimes forgetting to bring all the food off. His position was rather a curious one, as in the merchant service he had been a sort of Warrant Officer and now he was only a Chief Petty Officer. When he was brought before me on one occasion, I found him a difficult case to deal with, as if I stopped his leave I punished ourselves, and I therefore gave him the rank of Warrant Officer (without extra pay). This automatically stopped his " rum ration." The following day I stopped his officers' wine bill ! All went well for a long time, till we got to a foreign port and he again left our stores ashore ; this time I had to take more drastic measures. I took away his rank altogether and gave him " cells." The poor man lost quite two stone in the same number of days, and was released, cured of the habit of forgetfulness. He never owed me a grudge, and did most excellent service in all our engagements.

The principal training, apart from ordinary gun drill, etc., was to be ready to adapt ourselves to meet any situation, in a " tramp-like manner," that might arise, and to do everything that could possibly be

seen from outside the ship in a way that would not give any inkling that we were officers and men of H.M. Navy. In order to accustom ourselves to this, we used all mercantile terms. I was the Master, the wardroom became the saloon, the stokers became firemen. We had to be particularly careful in this respect, because of pilots frequently coming aboard, and it would never have done for me to have referred to the Navigator or Signalman, as tramps don't carry such people. Also when anchoring, the naval expression is to tell the First Lieutenant to veer the cable to " 3 " shackles : I had to shout out to the forecastle, " Mr. Mate, 45 in the water." In fact, the only thing that seemed common to both Navy and mercantile was the strong language.

Our " rig " I have already referred to, but it was, I am sure, not appreciated that the " outfit " had to include underclothing. The one thing a sailor likes (or used to) more than anything is his service flannel ; but this had to be barred, as it would never have done for service flannels to have been seen hung up to dry, nor for the men in the boats to have been seen with them on. Just as the ship was a man-of-war with a mercantile mask on, so the men had to have the heart of a bluejacket with the skin of a merchantman (not that merchantmen didn't always put up a gallant fight when they got a chance).

When going in or out of harbour, the outward appearance had to be natural—no leadsman heaving

the lead, no " brass hats " with megaphones, surrounded by buglers and messengers, no groups of men " fallen in " admiring the scenery. All we had was Mr. Mate in his bowler hat and the chippy chap (carpenter) on the fo'c'sle, a few firemen (stokers) lounging about on the well deck, smoking

MR. MATE AND THE CARPENTER GOING ON THE FORECASTLE TO ANCHOR.

and spitting, a steward or cook with an apron emptying slops over the side, the Master and one other on the bridge, and someone near our ensign to dip to the White Ensign. Cruising at sea, the same sort of positions were taken up, except that Mr. Mate would be busy with a few men on whatever was required ; if approaching harbour, this would be getting the

derricks ready for discharging cargo. We always arranged at sea that the men employed on odd jobs should be men near to their "action stations"—for instance, if a man was required for repairing the bridge screen, he would be a man who belonged to the 6-pounder crew there. In the early days, Masters still used to take their wives with them, and I therefore had one of the men dressed as a woman who used to sit below the bridge; sometimes he would carry in his arms something to represent a baby.

During daylight hours at sea half the men were always at the guns and look-outs at the end of the bridge; the remainder would be in their messes, the change round taking place via the alleyways. The stokers under the fo'c'sle were, of course, in their normal place, and so their change of watches were quite natural. It must be realised that the normal crew of a tramp would have been about thirty-two, and as we eventually had nearly eighty aboard, a large number had to keep out of sight. During night-time our routine varied according to weather and whereabouts, as the men were generally employed for a varying number of hours after dark altering the appearance of the ship or other essential work, and this on top of long hours at the guns. I generally used to try to arrange a good night in, except for the look-outs, though I don't think any of us ever undressed when at sea. I certainly never did.

The risk of being torpedoed at night was comparatively small, and during the dark hours there was no hope of getting the enemy; therefore we generally sailed either as a neutral or with lights on, so as to reduce the chance of being thought a transport. This was especially necessary on moonlight nights, when everything is in favour of the submarine.

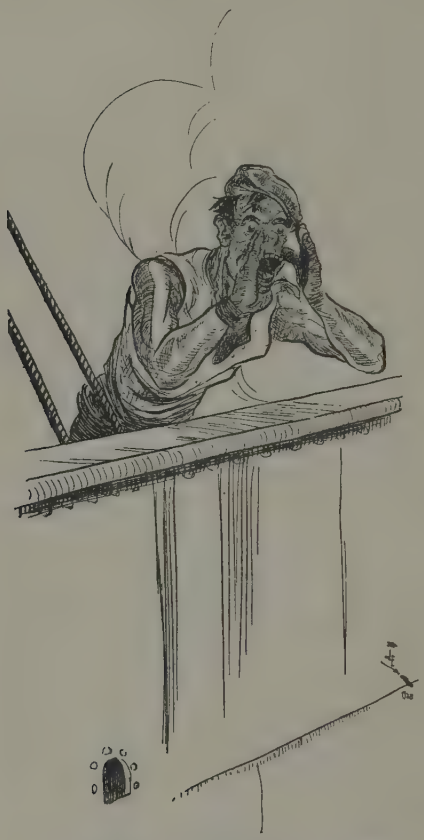
Having now arranged our normal way of cruising, the next thing was to prepare to meet and engage the enemy. Our object was to entice the submarine to come as close as possible to the ship on the surface with his lids open. How was this to be done? Obviously to encourage him to attack us, and then, by feigning to have abandoned the ship to its fate, induce him to come up. To add to the realism, the "abandon ship" was to be done in a "panic" and confusion, which caused the men who took part in this effort to be referred to as the "panic party."

It must not be imagined for a moment that the average British merchant ship is abandoned, if such becomes necessary, in a panic. We all know of too many heroic cases of ships sinking in war and peace without any trace of it. All the same, there is not too much time to be lost, especially if an impatient enemy is shelling you. The procedure then was, as soon as any enemy (even if only periscope) was sighted, the "alarm" was sounded. Different "alarms" were used, denoting whether the submarine was on the port or starboard side:

this was done so as to enable any men who were working on the upper deck to proceed to their action station on the offside—if his station was on the bridge, he would come up the " off " ladder. No one was allowed to run to his station (what a disgraceful thing for a man-of-war !) ; nor was anything in the way of crowding allowed—though this was dealt with by limiting the number of men on deck. The alarm sent all the guns' crews who were not already there to their guns and every man to his station, all the movements taking place unseen and underground as it were, by the alleyways and trap-hatches ; obviously you couldn't have about twenty men running about the deck and disappearing into hen-coops ! The men to whom I have referred before as lounging about, etc., remained in the same attitude of disinterestedness.

If a torpedo was fired, the order was given through the voice-pipes—" torpedo missed " or " torpedo hit." In the first case, all went on as before, maintaining the pretence that either we had not seen the " wake " or did not know what it was. In the second case, the ship was abandoned by the " panic party." This order to " abandon ship " might also be given in the event of our being shelled. Now, the " panic party " had to be thoroughly drilled and the whole performance rehearsed. Of course, from time to time we thought of improvements and variations, but the general procedure was as follows : all those men who had been hanging about the

upper deck rushed to the boats, men also came tumbling out of the fo'c'sle and up from the stoke-holds and engine-rooms; everything was pandemonium mingled with shouts for help. We did not imagine that the shouts for "help" would be heard by the submarine, especially if she was submerged, but I thought it would add to a more realistic acting of the play than a sort of "dumb" charade. A rush was made for the boats, and one boat was generally let go "with a run," end up. This even happens sometimes in the best regulated ships. The officer in charge would come to the bridge and swop hats with me, taking my gold-banded hat and becoming Master. He would be the last to



"A FIREMAN WOULD SHOUT TO BE SAVED."

get into the boats, accompanied by a stuffed parrot in its cage. The stuffed parrot was one of our afterthoughts, and we kept it in the saloon in a beautiful green cage. Sailors generally have some pet. Many pets were suggested, but after much discussion in the mess a parrot won the day. After the boats which contained about thirty men, and were rigged as a complete ship's company, with a proportion of officers, seamen, firemen, stewards, cooks, etc. had shoved off, a grimy stoker would appear from the stokehold, shouting and yelling, and a boat would go back to fetch him. They would now lay off the ship to see her finish. The ship would now be to all intents deserted, but in reality all the guns would be manned, the Chief Engineer and his party in the boiler-room and engine-rooms, the Captain and Quarter-master on the bridge, and a signalman ready to break out the white ensign. The signalman was Hurrell, a R.N.V.R. of the London Division.

The Quarter-master, who was always Jack Orr, would lay by the wheel, whilst the signalman and I were at either end of the bridge looking through little slits specially cut in the wooden screen which went round it. We got very thin at this job, because we had to practise changing places, which necessitated a very careful "belly crawl" from one side of the bridge to the other. This arrangement was necessary, so that I could be in the best position for seeing what was happening

whichever side the submarine might go to. Obviously, the ship being abandoned, one couldn't get up and walk across the bridge.

The wireless operator's men were divided between the panic party and guns' crews, except the senior one, Mr. Andrews, who remained at his post in the wireless-room. Shut up by himself, he had to sit tight and do nothing till ordered: on no account must he send out an S.O.S. if torpedoed, as such a signal would have brought Admiral Bayly's patrol craft swiftly to our rescue, and would have negatived any chance of decoying the wily enemy. All on board had, therefore, to lie still, in all circumstances, till orders to open fire or do something else were received. If a man was to look out of the port or be seen in any way by the submarine after the ship was "abandoned," the game would be up.

Later chapters will show how perfect the crew became, and how each individual realised he had a personal responsibility towards success. The next question that had to be settled was how to rehearse all this, and how to do target practice with the guns without being seen.

The first part was fairly simple, and for weeks on end we drilled every evening just at dark and each morning just before light, when movements on deck would not be seen. For the target practice, which was as frequent as possible, we had to take chances and select an area which, as far as "intelligence" could say, was free of any enemy. Not

"PANIC PARTY."

having any instructions for firing on board, we made our own, and our most frequent practice consisted of dropping two targets, one representing a conning tower and one a periscope; these we fashioned aboard. They were dropped some distance apart, and, steaming between the two, fire would be opened first on one and then on the other from both sides of the ship. We thought that submarines generally worked in pairs, and the idea was to be already engaging a submarine when the second one appeared with only the periscope showing: he would see what was going on, and there would be no chance of destroying him, but we would attempt to take away his eyesight and stop him torpedoing us.

This practice also had the advantage of bringing all guns into action at the same time, which gave the best test of efficiency or otherwise of our arrangements for "casting off disguise" and supplying of ammunition—this apart, of course, from the most important point of hitting the target quickly and frequently. Although for all these drills the "alarm" was sounded, I always arranged that a preliminary warning was given, and that the alarm would never be sounded without such warning unless the enemy was sighted.

By this means, although we drilled till I thought we were perfect, I also knew that if the enemy was sighted the "alarm" would send a thrill through the ship that would make each man thirty seconds quicker.

Whilst we were in the throes of fitting out, a rumour arose that an enemy agent knew all about our ship and her fitting out. I therefore suggested to the Admiral that a new name should be allocated to the ship, to be kept very secret till we had actually sailed. I also suggested that a rumour should be started ashore that the *Loderer* had sunk. No one on board knew that our name was to be changed ; of course they knew when we started our cruising we should sail under different names each day probably, but we had to have a permanent name for Admiralty, Dockyard purposes, and for mails.

I arranged to sail at dusk, and just before " slipping," an officer arrived on board in uniform to see the Master. It turned out to be Paymaster-Lieutenant Carpmael, an old school pal, whom I had relieved as captain of the School XV. I received him of course in my " get-up." What absurd situations the war created! I took him to my cabin, where he produced from his pocket a sealed envelope which contained the name, and which was not to be opened till after leaving harbour.

Without disclosing anything about the change of our official name, I had arranged that the appearance of the ship was to be changed as soon as it got dark : the donkey-boiler funnel had to go up, and two big steel bands painted white had to be placed high up round the funnel to change our funnel " markings." Dummy ventilators had to be shipped, and various other smaller alterations made.

We had anchored in the Sound just as it was dark, and the pilot was in my cabin waiting for his boat. The work of putting the funnel bands up had commenced, and in addition to making a frightful noise, we found they were far more difficult to get up than we thought, and we had eventually to discard them and paint the funnel itself.

The pilot in the meantime had heard a great noise going on, and was very alarmed and wanted to go out and see what it was all about, and on each occasion he tried to get to the door I had to push the whisky bottle towards him, and this, combined with my imagination, had the desired effect.

How I disliked pilots on this job! They caused me to tell more falsehoods than I care to think about.

Having eventually got rid of our pilot, we sailed—the envelope was opened, and our new name was *Farnborough*. The whole arrangement of defeating the action of any possible enemy agent worked almost too well, for, in addition to the new appearance of our ship, the change of name, and the yarn that the *Loderer* had been sunk, our letters were returned to our families through the Dead Letter Office. This of course caused some alarm, but it did not last. As soon as we were outside I told the crew why our name had been changed, and that they could write home any pictorial yarn they liked. I was surprised at the wealth of imagination, and the reasons given for now being the *Farnborough*. Some confirmed the rumour that the *Loderer* had

been sunk ; one fellow described how she had been torpedoed as she was leaving the harbour ; another wrote and said, " I'm fed up with the Navy. I joined *Loderer* last week, and now I have been transferred to another ship called *Farnborough*—always getting mucked about and never able to settle down."

The luckier ones of the crew, or the ones who had concocted the most pathetic accounts of the " imaginary loss " of the *Loderer*, were rewarded by receiving new socks, jerseys, etc., from their sweethearts.

CHAPTER V

CRUISING

November 1915 *to February* 1916

It was at the end of October that we sailed from Plymouth for Queenstown, which was to be our headquarters. Queenstown was a small naval base at the beginning of the war, but it became of great importance later on, and from having a Vice-Admiral in command it became the appointment of a Commander-in-Chief.

There was a small but very efficient dockyard there on Haulbowline Island, which lay opposite the town of Queenstown, where the C.-in-C. had his residence and headquarters at the top of a hill and so had a good view over the harbour. It was the most suitable place for our operations, as it was easy to get to any of the many trade routes which approach the British Isles. It often struck me that Queenstown would have been an excellent place to have had a sort of Admiralissimo of all the approaches to the British Isles from the westward and southward, Plymouth, Milford, etc., being sub-bases. Whitehall is too far away, and the sea air doesn't penetrate so far. But now I am getting beyond the scope of my book.

Needless to say, Jack Orr had to steer the ship out of harbour, being relieved as necessary by Beswick. As I have already related, we became the *Farnborough* after clearing the Sound. On the way round we started our instruction in steering and ordinary seamanlike duties, in addition to gun drill and our own special duties. Our course to Queenstown was not by any means a steady one—as in addition to the men being " under instruction " at the helm, nearly the whole crew were seasick. I shudder to think what would have happened had we encountered a submarine.

On arrival at Queenstown we had our first experience of " acting." First we had to deal with the examination steamer: such a steamer lying off the approach to every important harbour had the power to refuse a ship entrance, being supported by a shore battery if necessary, the guns of which were pointed so as to be able to drop a shot just ahead of the steamer. If the ship wishing to enter was " in order," a private signal consisting of certain flags or special lights was given to the latter, who hoisted them and proceeded in. On this occasion I got through without much difficulty as an " Admiralty collier," but on several occasions I had to tell a sheaf of lies before being passed.

The pilot and Customs officials then came on board, and we had to carry out our rôle of merchantmen. The pilot was most chatty, and expressed in unmeasured terms his opinion of the Navy. On

approaching the boom defence, a naval picket boat with a Lieutenant Commander in command came towards us and started shouting through the megaphone. I asked the pilot what he was. He replied, " By the way he is shouting and the language he uses he must think he's an Admiral." He went on to tell me there was too much Navy at Queenstown, and they seemed to think they owned the place.

It was after dark when we anchored, incidentally quite close to the mystery ship *Baralong*, which had already accounted for two submarines. It was blowing half a gale, but I was in a hurry to report myself to my new C.-in-C., Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, and none too pleased to find the motor-boat wouldn't run. I asked the pilot the way to the C.-in-C.'s house ; he said, " It ain't no good wasting your time going up there ; he won't see the likes of you. Better come with me and have a half-and-half. Maybe someone in the Dockyard will give you orders later on to-morrow."

It took us nearly an hour and a half to get to the landing-place in our dinghy against the wind and tide, and, having done the necessary to get rid of my self-made friend, I trotted up the hill to report, with the answer to my first question (which I knew I would get) ready on my tongue ; and sure enough, when the Admiral came out from dinner, he shook hands and said, " When will you be ready for sea ? "

" Ready now, sir."

"All right. Remain in harbour for a day or two."

This was my first introduction to the Admiral, Sir Lewis Bayly, whom I was to serve under till the end of the war. It would be impossible for me to say how much we got to love him: he was an ideal C.-in-C. in every way—he had our confidence and we felt we had his. At first he used to give us sailing orders which were of the type that always allowed the man on the spot to do what he thought best, regardless of instructions; after a few months I used to go to sea without any sailing orders and just report each day what I was doing.

We all felt we were under a man who understood the game, understood our difficulties, and was ready to back us up through thick and thin—provided we did our job. As regards taking shelter from the gales, which are severe on that coast, the Commanding Officers of his craft had a free hand to shelter or not as they thought fit; but the Admiral reminded us that whilst getting back to our patrol after sheltering, the submarine would already have been on the spot and busy. The *Farnborough*, therefore, never took shelter from a gale, for we were all far too keen to get our chance, and determined that neither wind nor sea should rob us of it.

Admiralty House at Queenstown, which, thanks not only to the Admiral but also to his niece, Miss Voysey, C.B.E., became a second home to me, and was practically the only place in Queenstown I could go to when in plain clothes—the club or any other

REAR-ADMIRAL GORDON CAMPBELL ON BRIDGE OF "FARNBOROUGH" AT SEA, LIEUTENANT NISBET BEHIND HIM.

place was not desirable in our present job, in view of the necessity for secrecy and not allowing our existence to be known to more people than was necessary. The house, standing as it did at the top of a very steep hill, gave the Admiral a great advantage over his officers, as when sent for in a hurry one generally arrived puffing, and he could bite your head off before you had time to recover your breath.

During the day or two we were at Queenstown on this occasion, the Admiral came on board to have a look round. We knew he was coming, but we intended to give him no different reception to what he might expect from any ordinary steamer. It happened to be a pouring wet day, and as the barge, a naval steamboat used by Flag Officers, was seen approaching, no one was visible in the stern, and we thought he hadn't come. Mr. Mate (Lieutenant Beswick) was the only person "officially" on deck; I was keeping out of sight. The barge came alongside, and Beswick wanted to know what the —— they had come for. A figure clad in oilskins and sou'wester, who had been standing alongside the coxswain, jumped out and started to come up the gangway. Beswick, with his most suitable language, at which he was an adept, told him to get down out of it, as no one was allowed on board; but the figure ignored the abuse and stepped on board. It was the C.-in-C. himself! By this time I was at the gangway, having been watching and listening unseen; Beswick was some-

what taken aback, and had visions of dire penalties for his treatment of an Admiral, but all that the C.-in-C. said was, " Quite right. I like your ship and "—looking at my cap—" I like your cap." So all was well, and I expect Beswick chuckles to this day at the thoughts of having told a distinguished Admiral to go to Jericho.

I was often bumping up against such treatment myself, and whilst walking through the Dockyard one day, dressed in my skipper's " best "—reefer coat, red tie, and bowler hat—I was stopped by one of the Royal Irish Constabulary and asked for my pass, a possession necessary for any civilian in the Dockyard. Unfortunately I had left it on board, and my excuses were of no avail. I was placed under arrest and in due course was marched by a Sergeant between two burly policemen to the Captain of the Dockyard's office. I was in a great hurry, but reckoned I would only cause suspicion if I said so, and I therefore calmly had to submit to waiting outside the office for nearly an hour—no doubt through malice aforethought on the part of the Captain, that officer not knowing who it was and wishing to give a lesson. When I was finally marched in, he spoilt the whole show by roaring with laughter and apologising !

On another occasion I was being taken ashore by a naval dinghy which had been sent for me. It contained two bluejackets. I jumped into the boat and automatically sat down in the stern ready

to steer; one of the young A.B.'s said, "'Ere, get out of that; you don't know nothing about steering." I meekly shifted my seat and made room for him. The next thing I got was, "S'pose it's no good telling you to trim the dish, 'cos you wouldn't know what it meant. Anyhow, sit there."

The worst offence I ever committed at this Dockyard was one day, when going round a corner in a hurry, I unfortunately ran into a party of bluejackets, one of whom was carrying a "mess kettle" of rum. I collided with him, and some of the valuable contents were capsized. I have never been called such names in my life as were hurled at me then. My first impulse was to put the man under arrest for insulting his superior officer, but, realising I was only the skipper of a dirty tramp, I doffed my bowler hat and offered my most humble apologies.

This first stay at Queenstown was very useful and necessary, as for purposes of pay and provisions we were a tender to the depôt ship *Colleen* there, and it was desirable both for the *Colleen* and for the officials in the Dockyard to be initiated into some of our secrets, so that they were not taken aback when they got somewhat unusual demands for a collier from the Master of s.s. *Farnborough*. We had many difficulties to overcome, as it was not always easy to make it clear that we were a collier in all respects, and that I was the Master and not a Lieutenant-Commander, and so on—but at the

same time we were to be given anything we asked for. We were lying amongst other colliers, and so it was essential for us to be very careful in all respects ; the men on deck had to appear dirty and slack, but as I have mentioned, their mess-deck had to be up to man of war standard. One day we nearly got ourselves into trouble with the Flag Captain. He had sent two wireless ratings in uniform with bags and hammocks to the ship in a service steamboat—being daylight, it would have caused suspicion if they had been seen joining us. The boat was therefore hailed and told not to come alongside ; but the coxswain naturally didn't intend to take orders from the Mate of a tramp, and shouted back words to that effect, saying he was going to obey the Flag Captain's orders ; but he didn't, as when he got close enough two or three of my men on deck pelted them with coal. They lost the day, and had to return to the *Colleen*, with many oaths. Of course the coxswain reported us, but I was at sea before the balloon went up, and didn't return till the incident had been forgotten.

We found that our boats were in a very bad way, and on one occasion here we nearly lost our steward and all our food, as the boat leaked so badly it nearly filled. We had not tried them at Plymouth, as they had all just been passed fit at Cardiff !

At the time we started operations there was practically no submarine activity going on at all in our part of the world, it having stopped, I believe,

for political reasons. This was a disappointment to all of us, but in reality was a blessing in disguise, as it enabled us to become hardened together in the winter gales and to get our ship really efficient. It was known that submarines were on passage from Germany to the Mediterranean, and so we were ordered to "keep the sea" to the westward of Ireland in the hopes of sighting them whilst on passage.

After forty-eight hours at Queenstown we sailed. We called first at Berehaven, and this harbour became our base so long as dockyard assistance was not required. It was an ideal place when working off the west or south-west coasts of Ireland, for it had a good anchorage, and was easy to get in and out of without any pilots nosing around. Here a few men could go ashore and stretch their legs without causing suspicion, although on our first visit we had rather a contretemps when one of the men sampled the wine of the country—poteen—with disastrous results. He was arrested by the R.I.C., who brought him on board the following day and informed me that he had gone mad. I asked why, and they said he had been talking about his collier being fitted with guns, and how she was always changing her name. I agreed with the R.I.C. that the man must be mad, and took them all round the ship without disclosing any secrets to show what a liar the man was.

This was the only case I ever had of a man giving

away our secret and, as the R.I.C. didn't believe it, it didn't matter, but the man was sent to a place where they don't talk to each other—*pour exemple*.

The only other trouble of this sort was a man bringing off a bottle of poteen in his pocket. This of course could not be allowed, and although he was one of the best men in the ship and did not know it was a serious "offence," I had to give orders for him to be confined in my ready-made "cells" for a prolonged period, these consisting of a portion of the cargo space. This man served with me till the end of the war. I mention this as an example of how difficult it was at first to maintain a very strict naval discipline on some occasions and an apparently lax one at others. Once we all understood, of course things were much easier.

On entering Berehaven, we had difficulties with the Examination Officer—a Warrant Officer of the Navy. He boarded us and was very suspicious, as I had given my name as *Farnborough* and was flying the Admiralty signal as such, but his flag book had not been corrected and my signal was the number of some other ship. I showed him my bills of lading, 5,071 tons of coal at Cardiff, and store-notes from H.M. Dockyards, but still he wouldn't let me in. I finally showed him the Navy List with my name in it and, having threatened him with the Naval Discipline Act, I finally got through, after congratulating him on his smartness and making him promise to keep our secret.

The Customs officials here were more easy to deal with, and a few kind " words " got me a " green clearance pass " which lasted me a long time and saved me many delays when stopped by H.M. ships —as ships carrying these passes were supposed to be " in order."

On leaving Berehaven our winter cruising really began. We were never on any definite " patrol " like a destroyer or patrol craft would be, confined to a certain line or radius. At this particular time we had the whole south-west and west coasts of Ireland to operate in, and as far into the Atlantic as we liked.

The chief thing we always had to have in mind was that during daylight hours a submarine was always watching us ; this applied to every man on board. For this reason, by the time the sun rose, we were always on a definite track from one assumed place to another. This means that if we were supposed to be the s.s. *Nonsuch* from New York to Bristol Channel, at sunrise we would be on the route that such a ship would take and we would maintain it till sunset. During the dark hours one would, if necessary, get into some suitable position by next morning. If one was on a run, say, from Gibraltar to Lerwick round the west of Ireland, it would be unnecessary to alter course during the night or to alter the appearance of the ship. On the other hand, if, owing to the submarine intelligence, one particularly wanted to be in the vicinity of the

Fastnet two or three days running, then the appearance of the ship must be changed each night and the course altered during the night to get into a good position by daybreak. The great thing was that once having decided on a "route" for the day, that route had, in practically every case, to be maintained; for if one were suddenly to alter course, or turn right round, or to be seen steering in a direction that led to no harbour, then if a submarine was watching, suspicion would at once be aroused and the game would be at an end, as far as success was concerned. I believe a neglect of this precaution was often the cause of "giving the show away."

It must also be remembered that the enemy submarines were generally fairly well informed about shipping movements, especially from the American continent; and consequently if one was "impersonating" a special ship, either British or neutral, it was necessary to be about the same tonnage as the ship impersonated as well as to be in about the position and on about the course that the real ship would be. All these details and many others had to be carefully considered, together with all the information available about the movements of every submarine, before deciding on the procedure for the following day.

During November, December, and January, we had ample time to get into the swing of this new kind of "thought," as we saw nothing at all. We went up and down the west coast and round the corner

without an alarm, but we learned a lot. We found out the weaknesses of the ship which enabled us to remedy them before meeting the enemy; for this purpose we sometimes anchored off Blacksod Bay or off Galway, as far out of sight of land as possible. We suffered gale after gale, and on two occasions our rudder broke adrift, and on one occasion we spent a day and a half rolling in the Atlantic completely at the mercy of the sea. On another occasion our "steering engine-house" got smashed by the sea. This might have been very awkward, as it disclosed our gun, but we were able to make sufficient repairs to last till we got dockyard help. During all these times the guns were kept manned, but the chances of a submarine appearing were very remote, and I am afraid if they had not been we shouldn't have made much of a show, the weather for the most part being too bad to hit even a haystack.

On another occasion our one and only fresh-water tank sprang a leak and we got salt water. This was rather serious, and we went into Berehaven and "watered ship" with barricoes. Of course there would have been simpler ways of remedying the case, but realising all the time that we were under training, I thought a few hardships would do us all good, and I always avoided Queenstown or other dockyard ports as much as I could, as once near a dockyard "defects" always increase. After cruising up and down for some time, we thought

that if the submarines on passage to the Mediterranean didn't want to waste efforts at a moving target, perhaps they would have a go at a stationary one.

I have already pointed out how on occasions we were stopped involuntarily, but that was in bad weather; now, however, we conceived an idea of stopping in fine weather, which we sometimes did. Our procedure was to become a "neutral," stop engines about 9 a.m., and hoist the signal for "Not under control," hoping that the bait would tempt the submarine; but it never came off, because, as we knew afterwards, there were no submarines there. On other occasions I would make our position course and speed *en clair*, so that if a submarine heard it, he might, with luck, attack us. Stunts of this sort kept the men going, for, as I had anticipated, there were two or three "grousers" on board, and they can always create a lot of uneasiness, especially in a small ship.

One of our little quiet laughters was at H.M. ships, which would approach us with a signal: "What ship?" Answer: "*Lovedale*." "Where from?" Answer: "Boston." "Where bound?" Answer: "Liverpool." Further signal: "Proceed; keep a good look-out for submarines." Sometimes the trawlers were far more inquisitive, and I remember one, when we were off Galway, firing a shot across our bows for not obeying her signal to "stop instantly." I always thought the trawlers very plucky, as they never knew on

that coast when they might not be up against a raider.

We spent Christmas Day at Berehaven, but on entering the harbour the examination steamer gave me the wrong " signal for the day," with the result that as we were steaming to our anchorage the shore battery put a shot across our bows. I at once went full astern, as it had been carefully calculated to just miss me by a few feet, and I didn't want another any closer. We nearly went aground as a result, but the mistake having been discovered, we were soon safely at anchor. I believe that the only other shot fired from the battery on Bere Island during the war was under similar circumstances at the *Baralong*.

One of the attractions of Berehaven was that we met there the " sloops " when in from patrol, our chummy one being the *Zinnia*, with Lieutenant-Commander G. F. W. Wilson in command : this gave us a welcome change, as otherwise, even ashore, we lived a life very much to ourselves. Only a very few men were allowed ashore, and then only for two or three hours at a time to get provisions. It was one of the hardships they had to put up with. It might seem stupid to be lying in harbour—cleaning boilers and so out of action—and not allow them all ashore, but I couldn't run the risk of causing suspicion by having a large number of different men going ashore each day from a " collier," especially owing to the state that Ireland was in at that time.

The officers also seldom went ashore here, but on one occasion I was tempted to do so by Smith; Beswick accompanied us. We landed close to the house of a well-known character at Berehaven—Murphy; from him we hired farm horses and went for a ride, but the only one who knew anything about riding was Smith. We ambled along gently for several miles and turned to go back. Smith, who was a regular John Gilpin, got behind us, and, urging his own horse on, made us all gallop back as hard as the horses would go. I couldn't stop my horse, though I put on all the brakes I could think of; anyhow, we got back without the disaster I saw facing me. It was Smith's quiet way of informing the Master and Mr. Mate that their livers wanted shaking up. He certainly succeeded. On Boxing evening we had a concert on board, the leading hands being Statham and Fletcher, both wireless ratings, and were just in the middle of it when our very first report of the enemy was received. In a few hours we were out at sea, but unfortunately there was nothing doing. Anyhow, being once out we remained out, and on the 31st encountered the worst gale I have ever known. Although steaming our full speed of 8 knots, we were going astern all the time, and Jack Orr, who was washed overboard trying to get a deep sea sounding, was washed back again.

The situation, from my point of view, got rather serious—we had had no " sights " for several days,

nor sighted the land. I knew we were fairly close to the rocky and dangerous south-west coast of Ireland, but how far? We were heading to the westward, a point or two off the wind, and slowly being driven towards the land. I therefore decided that before dark I would turn round and set a course to the south-eastward to cut off the corner. Beswick told me he thought we would capsize if I attempted it in that sea, which, to use a common but often inaccurate expression, was mountains high. Having in my mind that it would be a better chance of safety than being driven on the rocks in the night, I decided to turn, and started to do so. Everyone on board was warned to "hold tight," and the helm was put over. When we got beam on to the sea we lay over and stayed there for what seemed like hours, but was probably a minute or perhaps less; it was long enough to be quite distinct and for us all to think we were over and for me to think, "Beswick was right." The ship wouldn't steer, and she turned, on her own, 28 points (bringing the wind on the other bow), and we went through the same unpleasant feeling again of going over on our beam. Fortunately all was well, for although the gale lasted the whole night and part of the following day, we found ourselves some thirty miles off the coast.

We were somewhat badly battered about, and after another few weeks of fruitless cruising we returned to Queenstown for refit and leave—wiser

and better men, but a little depressed at the thoughts that the enemy had abandoned his submarine warfare and that we might not have a scrap after all. We had had a hard time, and, as our Admiral said at a later date, we had faced the winter gales and stuck to it, always hoping for a chance.

We had certainly had every damage done by the sea that anyone could want, and it must be remembered that for a long time I was entirely dependent on Beswick and Truscott for any important or unusual seamanship job, Jack Orr being at the wheel on these occasions, and my R.F.R. men at the guns. I have seen these two work twenty-four hours on end, not only once, but frequently, both of them up the funnel or up the mast, putting new stays up or repairing the " aerial " ; there was always something that required their personal, not only superintendence, but practical handling. They were a fine combination.

I met the other day one of my old crew, told him I was writing this book and asked him if he had any yarns I had forgotten. He said, " Well, don't forget to mention that winter in the Atlantic. It was the hardest few months I ever had in my life—as fast as we put things right the sea smashed them up again, and however long the hours we worked you were never satisfied unless everything was exactly as you wanted."

Although at this time the ship was not an entirely contented one, I at least felt that our " training "

was complete, and with few exceptions my " mixed crowd " were now a " crew." The opportunity of a spell in harbour enabled me to get rid of the " wasters " and grousers ; when once they were out of the way, things looked better, especially as it was during this period we acquired our two additional 12-pounders and two 6-pounders, which were fitted in Haulbowline Dockyard. The crews for the additional guns came from a mystery ship, *Vala*, which had fitted out up north and was now paid off at Queenstown. They didn't seem to like the change, as they found my routine more severe, and they didn't get the leave they had been used to, nor did they take kindly to the mixed crew I had, as they were all pukka Navy. One of the senior of them committed an act against discipline on the first day, so I seized the bull by the horns, publicly disrated him, and never had a minute's trouble after. He was quite a good fellow, but a sea-lawyer ; anyhow, he got his rate back later. The crew were all given leave to England, for even at Queenstown I gave no night leave and only very restricted other leave.

I wished to stay aboard and personally see to the fitting of the guns, but the Admiral gave me a direct order to proceed on leave—the only time I have received such an order, though I should often have liked it at other times.

We soon got to know the " ropes " in Haulbowline and received every assistance from all the

officers and men, especially Mr. Walker, the Constructor, and Mr. Bennett, the Naval Store Officer.

Admiral Bayly didn't like the look of our wheelhouse and said it was a bad disguise. I pointed out that I had passed him at sea in his flag-ship and hadn't been bowled out. In fact, we had exchanged the usual signals of "What ship? Where from?" etc., and I had given the usual lies in reply. Anyhow, he threatened to have it removed, but after much pressing he said, "All right, as you're the fellow who dangles the gong you can keep it; but if you don't get a submarine next time you go out, I shall remove it."

My cabin was seriously messed up at this time owing to the deck having to be strengthened in it to support a gun. Admiral Bayly came in to it one Saturday forenoon and insisted on my having a new carpet on top of the other to make it warmer. I said I would see about it, but the Admiral, who always took a personal interest in our welfare, said that he would do it to make sure there was no mistake. He therefore sent an urgent message to the Naval Store Officer that he was to go on board my ship at once and have a new carpet installed by the evening. Poor Bennett[1] was just off for his monthly fishing afternoon, instead of which he had to fit the Master of a collier's cabin with a small square carpet. I don't think he has recovered from the shock yet.

Whilst we were in Haulbowline Dockyard the

[1] The Naval Store Officer.

submarine warfare had started anew and ships were again being sunk off the Irish coast. We had been on the job now nearly six months, and for the activity to start again when we were *hors de combat* was almost too much for us, and the Dockyard probably well remember it, as we were like a dog tearing at its leash.

We also had to be on the look-out for the work of Sinn Feiners when in Ireland, and we had a proper scare one night when Beswick was doing his nine-o'clock rounds. He heard something "ticking," and not being able to trace it, concluded it was a bomb, and that we should all be blown up. He was on his way to me to report, when a seaman, who was wondering what all the fuss was about, announced he had bought an alarm clock whilst on leave and it was ticking away in his ditty-box.

We were in dockyard hands some weeks, and the C.-in-C. was a little anxious about our ship becoming known; special disguises had, therefore, to be arranged, so that if any photos were taken, the ship would look quite different when at sea. A complete false cabin side was built, which made it look as if all the cabins were outboard instead of in the middle.

The day before we sailed the C.-in-C. came on board, and as he was leaving, he said to me at the gangway, "All right, you get on to Berehaven to-morrow." It was all over the yard that afternoon that we were going to Berehaven. I persisted

that I knew nothing about it, and hadn't got any orders yet, but as someone had actually overheard the Admiral telling me, they merely thought I was either a knave or a fool.

We sailed the following evening, and when clear of the harbour our disguises and false cabin side were demolished and we set course for Milford Haven, although the Navigator had all the charts ready for Berehaven. After a few days of intensified drill with our new guns and some new men, we sallied forth full of hope.

CHAPTER VI

HOW U.68 WAS SUNK

We had hardly left the harbour when we began receiving S.O.S. signals and other messages indicating submarine activity. The south coast of Ireland seemed to be the most promising locality, so we set our course accordingly.

Each evening I would post a " Press Bureau " in the messes, containing the gist of the wireless messages I had received during the day, touched up by a little imagination to make them readable. By this means I kept everyone informed, as far as possible, of what was going on ; also, by " apparently " telling " everything," it was much easier to keep any real secret message from being divulged. This latter was really necessary, as the word " secret " was used so wholesale during the war that it lost a lot of its value.

Our sea routine at this time was, of course, varied according to the circumstances of the day, but it worked out something like this :

One hour before sunrise : Call the hands. Drill. Exercise " panic party." Boats would not actually be lowered very frequently.

On completion of drill, "Cruising stations." This meant half the men would be at the guns.

A few men from the watch below would be told off for cleaning the bridges, etc.

7.30 : Forenoon watch to breakfast.
8.0 : Change watches. Second breakfast.
8.30 : Watch below clean mess-decks.
9.0 : Division and prayers.
11.30 : Men for afternoon watch to dinner.
12.0 : Change watches. Dinner.
3.30 : Men for dog watches to tea.
4.0 : Change watches. Tea.
4.30 : Clear up mess-decks.
5.0 : Evening quarters. Inspect mess-decks.
6.0 : Press Bureau issued.

Sunset : Prepare for any changes in disguise.

Half-hour after sunset : Guns' crews "fall out." "All hands on deck" to alter appearance. This might take one or six hours—supper being fitted in as convenient. Drill would also take place if necessary.

9.0 : Rounds and report to Master.

Special look-outs placed during the night according to visibility and other circumstances.

This, of course, is only a sketch of what we did, as so many other things had to be done, such as picking up survivors, coaling ourselves at night. But the main routine was adhered to as far as possible.

We found that the painting of bands round our funnels in the pitch dark was no easy job and took a long time. It will be remembered that we originally intended to have steel bands in two pieces that fitted tightly round the funnel, and were then screwed together; but these, after repeated trials, having proved impracticable, we had to revert to painting, and it needed tremendous care and patience to get the lines straight. But thanks to the personal care of Beswick and Truscott, who often went up the funnels themselves, we always presented a decent funnel band.

In harbour more time could be given to cleaning the inside of the ship, examining guns, and so on.

My request men and defaulters, which after the first three months got fewer and fewer, I would see on the "quarter-deck." The request men consisted of men who had become due for good-conduct badges or who wished to make out allotments; in fact, anything within reason they wished to request.

The most amusing case I had to deal with was during our winter cruising. It must be understood that although I kept what was called "contingency" money aboard for buying provisions, sending telegrams, and so on, yet our pay was sent by cheque from our depot ship *Colleen*. After payment one day a man started a buzz that he reckoned they were being done down by the Purser of the *Colleen*, and were not receiving their proper pay.

In a few days Beswick informed me that there was great discontent amongst the men about their pay. Knowing that discontent is a thing to be settled at once, I had all the crew mustered, and told them I had heard their grievance and that I wanted each man to make me out by 9 a.m. the following day an exact statement of all the money they had received since joining the Navy, together with all their debts to the Crown in the way of "slops," insurances, and so on. Knowing that some of the men could hardly read or write and that none of them were experts at arithmetic, I felt on pretty safe grounds, and when I mustered them at 9 a.m. the following day I was informed that no one had put in a statement as they were all quite satisfied, and I never had any more such complaints, although I found out after making official inquiries that they were, as I expected, entirely without reason; yet complaints are things which grow unless dealt with.

Cruising certainly became more interesting and exciting, for, when one heard of other ships being attacked, it seemed inevitable that our chance must come sooner or later. As, however, the submarine invariably went to a different position after attacking a ship, it was extraordinarily difficult if not impossible to hit it off. It can easily be imagined that even if a ship and a submarine wanted to meet each other by arrangement in the middle of the ocean, with limited visibility and bad weather that would be no easy matter. Add to this that neither the

submarine nor the ship had any but the vaguest idea of where the other one was, and the difficulties can be gauged ; but we lived in hope. So intent were all hands on an engagement that, when we had burnt all our bunker coal, instead of returning to harbour in order to replenish we refilled from our cargo, a slow and tedious business which could only be carried out in darkness.

We didn't have to wait long for our first excitement, which might have ended very unpleasantly. We were steaming along as a neutral ship ; this at night was done by having an illuminated " sky sign " on top of our wheel-house which spelt the nationality we were supposed to be. Arrangements were of course made to extinguish it should we become engaged ; but the whole idea of sailing as neutral was to avoid night action. About 10 o'clock we sighted a low-lying vessel on our port bow steering slowly in the opposite direction to us. After carefully watching her, I came to the conclusion she was a submarine and put my helm over to ram her. We had no searchlights on board, so gunfire would have been of no use. On turning to ram, I realised my mistake and saw the object was a patrol sloop. So I returned to my course, but of course he, in his turn, was now suspicious of me and I was afraid he would open fire. He turned and closed me and signalled, " What ship ? " I gave our assumed name and added, " Helm jammed "—my name happened to resemble a

word chiefly used among sailors; he probably thought I was now trying to insult him as well as having tried to ram him, as he kept following me on my quarter and signalling "What ship?" always with the same reply. It was not till I had got a secret wireless signal through to him that he left me alone.

We did everything we could to try to get contact with a submarine. Each day we plotted carefully all the reports received to try and see whether the enemy worked on any "system," but apparently, except that they sometimes seemed to be working in pairs, I could only imagine that each Captain of a submarine had his own system.

There were one or two places that they all seemed to make for, such as the principal lighthouses. This was possibly to check their positions for navigational purposes. It appeared to be something to go on, and we frequently made for such lighthouses, so as to be off them at daybreak.

We also tried our previous scheme of stopping and being "not under control" or "disabled." On another occasion we heard two submarines talking to each other one night and they appeared to be fairly close. We thought to encourage them by making *en clair* wireless signals to our "owners" at Liverpool, such as, "Have been delayed by weather; am now in latitude —— longitude ——; expect to arrive Liverpool 6 a.m. Friday." I would then change my tune and answer myself,

saying, "Your message received." By this means we hoped to convey to the submarine where we were and what course we would be steering. It never came off; possibly he was not listening on our wave-length. Anyhow, it was a chance and worth trying.

We frequently sailed neutral, which needed a lot of preparation during the hours of darkness, as in addition to the funnel wanting some special painting, alterations in the ship had to be made—the colour boards put in place, the name and port of registry painted on, and we generally removed the Plimsoll marks, as I noticed so many neutral ships hadn't got them. It was no use pretending to be something you weren't unless you attended to every detail. It will be remembered how the *Emden*, when she pretended to be an Allied ship, had to put up a dummy funnel to complete her disguise and have the same number as the ship she hoped to be taken for. There was one disadvantage of sailing neutral, and that was that it was expected that submarines would sometimes follow neutral ships, perhaps to find out what routes were being used or to allay the suspicions of other ships that there were submarines about.

After a few weeks of trying to secure a meeting with the enemy, we got news of a submarine coming down the West Irish coast, and, guessing that he would probably try to sight one of the lights at the south-west corner before starting on his career of destruc-

tion in the Channel or Bay of Biscay, we set our course accordingly for the next two days. I always had in mind that it would be an additional help to our side to get a submarine before he started his career of sinkings, as thereby many additional tons of valuable shipping and many valuable lives would be saved. Daylight on March 22nd, 1916, found us steering up the west coast at 8 knots, representing a collier flying no colours bound for the North, and keeping just at the extreme submarine visibility range from the coast.

At 6.40 a.m. the port look-out—Kaye—reported a suspicious object on the horizon on the port bow, about five miles distant. A quick look with glasses disclosed the fact that it was a submarine awash. It was barely daylight, and a small object so far away is very deceptive and might easily be a small fishing craft, especially as submarines frequently disguised themselves as sailing craft by putting up masts and sails; but after watching carefully for a few minutes the submarine submerged, leaving no doubt as to what the object was. Our position at the time was latitude 57° 56′ N., longitude 10° 53′ W.

There was nothing to be done except steam quietly on, the men having already gone to their "action" stations at the first report of a "suspicious object." The submarine, on his part, would naturally expect that he had sighted us (a fairly big object with smoke) before we had seen him; so, if we wished to be

attacked, no attempt must be made to escape—in fact, we had to pretend we hadn't seen him. This was a fairly easy matter for the next twenty minutes, though it was rather a novel sensation to us all when we realised that practically for certain in a short time we should be attacked by an invisible enemy and perhaps blown sky high without the chance of a shot in reply. I think the most apt expression I have seen applied to this sort of game is " Live human bait." It seemed strange also to think that although we made no alteration of course or speed, yet we were really the attackers, simulated ignorance, and eventually defence in order to make our offence.

So with the guns loaded, their crews concealed beside them, the man on the bridge watching for the next move of the enemy, and all the time the disinterested crew of this tramp lounging about chatting and smoking, we waited, wondering whether we would be attacked by gun or torpedo. The wait may not have been very long by the clock, but it was terribly long to those on board. The answer came at seven o'clock, when the track of a torpedo was seen approaching, which we made no attempt to avoid. It was fired from our starboard quarter —a bad position from the submarine point of view. The bubbles of the track passed under the forecastle, which meant that the torpedo had just missed us ahead. We, therefore, maintained our course and took no outward notice, as a tramp steamer (at that

time) could not be expected to know what a torpedo track looked like, and in any case the " look-outs " would neither be numerous nor very bright at that hour of the morning.

We could have escaped with ease if we had been an ordinary steamer by putting our stern towards him and steaming off at full speed. He might have opened fire with his gun, but under the weather conditions prevailing the steamer would have got away.

To the men concealed at the guns and elsewhere this was the first great test of the discipline and drill we had been training for, as it was obvious that the submarine might fire another torpedo and perhaps successfully. All remained quiet, and the men, lounging about, continued to smoke their pipes. One young seaman was whistling at his gun, because, as he explained when asked what he was doing, " if he didn't whistle he would get scared." A few minutes after the torpedo had missed us, the submarine came to the surface astern of the ship and steamed up on our port side. As he came up, his gun was manned and he fired a shot across our bows as a signal to stop. After firing his shot he closed down and partially submerged again, obviously ready to dive in a few seconds if we attempted to ram. But in the meantime we had proceeded with our pantomime as prearranged, and, as soon as the shot fell, the engines were stopped, steam was blown off, and the panic party got busy. Their

methods have already been described, and they entered into the spirit of it with more zeal than ever —a great scrambling for the boats took place, which apparently satisfied the submarine as to our *bona fides*, for he came right on the surface again and closed towards the ship, this before we had even got to the stage of lowering the boats. I was still rushing about the bridge and had not yet been relieved of my cap by the Navigator. The submarine was evidently in a hurry to get on with the business and go after another prey, as he fired a shot at us which fell just short of the magazine, a matter of a few feet.

He was now about 800 yards off, showing full length, and although the range was a little bit greater than I wished, the time had come to open fire before he might touch off our magazines. I therefore blew my whistle. At this signal the White Ensign flew at the masthead, the wheel-house and side-ports came down with a clatter, the hen-coop collapsed ; and in a matter of seconds three 12-pounder guns, the Maxim, and rifles were firing as hard as they could. The submarine had been successfully decoyed to a suitable position on the surface with his lid open and gun manned. Everything now depended on the accuracy of the fire ; but the target was a comparatively small one, and we had no rangefinders to help us, so that the distance of the target was reckoned by eye. The fire was accurate, and before the submarine could get

closed down again we had hit him several times as he slowly submerged. In all, 21 rounds were fired from the three 12-pounders, one gun getting off 13 rounds. The Maxim and rifles wasted no time in getting off some 200 rounds at the personnel on the deck of the submarine, who were manning the gun, but now rapidly sought shelter inside the submarine.

As soon as he had submerged and there was nothing more to fire at, we steamed at full speed to the spot where he had gone down, for at the moment there was nothing actually to show whether he had been destroyed or not, although we knew we had hit him, as he had closed his conning tower before diving. Two depth charges were therefore dropped, and almost simultaneously the submarine, that had obviously been trying to rise, came up nearly perpendicular, touching our bottom as it did so. We were still steaming ahead when the submarine passed down our side a few yards off, and it could now be seen that in addition to a periscope having been shot off there was a big rent in the bows. Our after-gun was leaving nothing to chance and put a few more rounds in at point-blank range. A couple more depth charges were released, and the surface of the sea became covered with oil and small pieces of wood—but there was no living soul.

This boat, it was ascertained afterwards, was U.68, and by destroying her before she got to her hunting-ground, we had done exactly what we set

out for. The great feeling of rejoicing and relief to all on board showed itself in the whole crew rushing to the bridge and cheering. This might appear as a relaxation of discipline, but it was really a strengthening of it. When all were present, I read the " Prayer of Thanksgiving for Victory " from the Book of Common Prayer, followed by three cheers for the King, and then all went back to " cruising stations," but not before one of the wags had produced the gramophone and put on the record of " Down among the dead men let him lie."

This success had a good effect for the decoy ships in general, as it had been many months since the previous happy results, but we on board little thought that it would be nearly a year before we had another successful action, and that though the game was difficult already, it was to become more so.

Our immediate thoughts were to stay at sea and look for another U-boat, which we proceeded to do, but the C.-in-C. wished us to return to Queenstown. We arrived the following morning at 7 a.m., and the Admiral's barge came alongside with a personal letter of congratulations as well as some new-laid eggs, which I had no doubt Miss Voysey had been out to collect for me. These small acts of thoughtfulness on the part of a busy Admiral and a busier niece were what helped to make Queenstown what it was not only to us but also to the Americans when they came over. At 9 a.m. I saw the C.-in-C. and got the usual question, " When will you be ready

for sea ? " I gave our usual reply, and we sailed again at noon, but not before he had come on board and talked to the whole crew, telling them how he appreciated the way they had stuck all the winter gales, how our success was due to good discipline and training, and that had one man made a mistake the action would have been a failure. It wasn't often the Admiral made speeches, so we were particularly pleased and proud. I think one of the things that particularly pleased the Admiral was that my signals reporting the action had arrived whilst he was having his breakfast, and he said they were as good as a morning paper. They were brief, but contained all that was necessary. They ran as follows :

" From *Farnborough*. 6.40. Hull of submarine seen. Position, latitude 57° 56′ 30″ N. ; longitude 10° 53′ 45″ W.

" 7.5. Ship being fired at by submarine.

" 7.45. Have sunk enemy submarine.

" 8.10. Shall I return to report or look for another ? "

Reply from C.-in-C., Queenstown : " Very well done. Please return to Queenstown."

To outsiders it may have appeared that we had earned a little rest and perhaps leave, but we had great confidence in our C.-in-C., who knew that the " pat on the back " and off to sea again was all we wished, so long as submarines were about.

About a week later, whilst we were at sea, a message was received from the C.-in-C. ordering us to call in at Queenstown next time we were passing. We happened to be fairly close at the time, so I made for the port. Admiral Bayly was in his barge in the Outer Roads, and hailed me to go up harbour to a buoy and said he would be coming on board. Miss Voysey was with him, and I regretted she would not be allowed on board, but one of the strictest Queenstown orders was that no ladies were allowed on board any ships in wartime. I had to break it once when I picked up two lady survivors. I proceeded to the buoy, but we had some difficulty in securing owing to the cable getting jammed. In the meantime the Admiral came on board accompanied by his Flag Captain—he had never done such a thing before, and I scented " trouble " of some sort. Perhaps the coal-heaving episode had leaked out! He ordered me to have all the crew mustered, and we walked about whilst waiting for them to be collected. There was some delay, as Mr. Mate and his hands were still working on the forecastle, the Admiral was getting impatient, the Flag Captain was beginning to scowl, so, having already made up my mind a " storm " was brewing, I went forward myself and told Beswick to bring everyone along and finish securing later. We were only riding to the buoy with one wire and an ebbtide was running, so that it was a bit of a risk—quite

unjustifiable—but I hoped with luck the wire would hold.

The Admiral now came to the mess-deck, and instead of any strafing he read to us all assembled a letter from the Admiralty, in which they conveyed their high commendation of our recent action, which they thought was due to thorough organisation and good nerve, and that all concerned deserved great credit.

They had promoted me to the rank of Commander and awarded several advancements to some ratings. In addition to this, £1,000 was awarded the ship to be divided in various proportions to all on board except commissioned officers of the Royal Navy (the only person being affected was myself).

Further, the Admiral read out rewards which had been bestowed on various officers and men by H.M. the King.

As he was leaving the mess-deck I heard a "report" and knew at once that our wire had parted. Imagine my thoughts! Here I had just received my "brass hat," and the first thing to happen was to have my ship—an awkward one at that—adrift in the harbour, for reasons which would have to be given as lack of seamanlike precautions. I pretended I did not know what had happened, and having winked my eye to Beswick and the Chief, who rushed to their respective duties on the forecastle and engine-room, I escorted the Admiral with such calmness as I could muster to the gang-

way. The usual exchange of " When will you be ready for sea ? " " Ready now, sir," having taken place, I rushed to the bridge and put the engine-room telegraph " full ahead," and with what sailors generally call " God's help and a fair wind " I was able to get hold of the buoy again—but it was a very narrow squeak.

The Admiral, when he shoved off, noticed that the wire had parted, and hailed me to know if I wanted a tug ; I should have loved one, but lies came so readily to my tongue in those days that I said, " No, thank you, sir ; everything is quite all right, as we have a second wire on." I don't suppose he believed me ; anyhow, " All's well that ends well," and he said nothing.

We went to sea again on the flood tide the next morning, thoroughly pleased with ourselves and the world.

List of Awards after Sinking U.68

Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant-Commander Gordon Campbell, R.N.

Distinguished Service Cross

Lieutenant W. Beswick, R.N.R.
Engineer-Lieutenant L. S. Loveless, R.N.R.

Distinguished Service Medal

Chief Petty Officer G. H. Truscott.
Wireless Telegraph Operator Allan Andrews, R.N.R.
Engine-room Artificer A. W. Morrison, R.N.R.

Promotions

Lieutenant-Commander Gordon Campbell, R.N., to Commander.

A.B. C. Webb, R.F.R., and Seaman A. Kaye, R.N.R., advanced to Leading Seamen.

Petty Officer C. Dowie advanced two years' seniority.

CHAPTER VII

ANOTHER ENGAGEMENT

April 1916

AFTER the sinking of U.68 and our brief visit to Queenstown we continued to cruise around the south-west and west coasts of Ireland. After our rather strenuous winter it was marvellous what a "brightening up" had taken place since our successful action; although we had never given up hope of an action sooner or later, we were beginning to wonder whether we were on a "dud" show or not. In fact, I think our success bucked up the whole Queenstown Command, as not only we but dozens of sloops, trawlers, drifters, and other craft had been going out day after day—always hoping, but invariably going back without any "fun." The submarine activity was still going on and we had great hopes of another action. My Press Bureau messages were read with extra enthusiasm, and a typical one may be of interest.

"Press Bureau, 6 p.m. s.s. *Farnborough.*

"At 5.30 this morning an S.O.S. was received from an unknown ship about 100 miles away. At 7.30 H.M. sloop picked up 25 survivors from

s.s. ——, which was torpedoed and sunk at 6 o'clock last night.

"At 9.5 s.s. —— reported sighting periscope off the Fastnet, and H.M. sloop —— also saw one (probably the same) about 11 o'clock and dropped depth charges. Almost at the same time an S.O.S. was heard from a neutral ship in the Bay of Biscay.

"Apparently a minefield has been discovered off Queenstown, as traffic has been stopped there. At 12 o'clock one of the Berehaven trawlers saw a submarine on the surface, but too far off to attack.

"The s.s. ——, homeward bound from Canada, was torpedoed at 3 p.m. off Ballycotton, probably by the same submarine that was sighted off the Fastnet. A sloop has her in tow, and hopes to get her in.

"U.S.S. —— sighted slick of oil off Fastnet at 3.30 p.m.

"A message was intercepted about 4 p.m. saying that all mines outside Queenstown had been swept up and traffic resumed.

"We are now about 50 miles south-west of Bull Rock and steering north, still hoping to intercept the submarine which is apparently coming south down the west coast. We should be close to him sometime to-morrow forenoon.

"Ship will sail as s.s. ——.

"Weather forecast is not very promising.

"GORDON CAMPBELL,
"*Master*."

The number of reports varied each day, but it was seldom that there was nothing to announce in the Press Bureau. I always put something up, even if it was an extra dull one, as it kept the crew's interest up and gave them something to talk about at supper. Unfortunately we were unable to get any Press news, as we had to reserve our only set of wireless, and that a small one, for service messages.

We continued to cruise off the south-west coast of Ireland. This still seemed a good hunting-ground, as the submarines that came north about had to pass the area. The entrance to the Channel or the Irish Sea often looked attractive, but there was more risk in those areas of being interfered with by patrol craft, trawlers, etc.; and although our actions were only one submarine and one ship, it was essential from our point of view that we should have a big ring. There was also the additional consideration, already mentioned, of trying to get the submarine before he started on his career of destruction.

We had not long to wait before encountering another submarine. One was reported off the Orkney Islands on April 13th, and, working on our previous ideas, we set off to try to intercept it off the south-west coast again.

The weather at this period was none of the best—not that it ever had been particularly good—and gales were frequent. On the 15th a very heavy Atlantic swell was rolling in after one of these

gales ; a heavy mist hung over the sea, and the visibility was barely two miles. At 6.30 p.m. on this day we were steaming northward and in nearly the same position as we had been when we engaged U.68. Suddenly a large ship was seen in the mist on our starboard beam, steering in an opposite direction : her nationality could not be made out, though she appeared to be of a foreign build. As we were looking at her a submarine was suddenly seen on the surface between the two of us, but closer to the other ship than us. We didn't actually see her " break surface," as the atmosphere was too thick to see anything very distinctly. This other ship turned out to be the Dutch steamer *Soerakarta*.

The submarine hoisted a signal, which we could not read owing to the weather conditions, so I hoisted the answering pendant, commercial code of course, at the " dip," meaning " Signal seen, but not understood." I had guessed—and, as I ascertained from later information, rightly—that the signal was T.A.F., which meant, " Send your papers on board." In any case I assumed it would be a signal of some sort to stop, so the engines were stopped and steam blown off, which was the most visible outward sign I could give that the engines were stopped, as it was too thick for him to judge by eye. Although " stopped," I jogged ahead every now and then, as we were lying in the trough of the swell and rolling heavily—a thing we wished to avoid—as it would make firing too difficult.

In the meantime I hoisted the signal, " Cannot understand your signal," and at the same time the bridge boat was turned out and Engineer Sub-Lieutenant Smith having borrowed my precious hat, assumed the rôle of Master, and was about to take our " papers " over to the submarine, the idea being to allay suspicion as well as entice the submarine nearer. This was one of the drills we had rehearsed for, as at this period of war it frequently happened that a ship was ordered to send over his papers. The " papers " consisted of a bundle of such as I kept in the chart-room for the purpose.

The submarine was probably just as unable to read our signal as we hers. That I couldn't know for certain, as my flags were high up and free from being masked, as his were by his conning tower. I had in mind that he must also be anxious to carry off a double event. The boat was nearly in the water when he fired a shot at us which whistled overhead ; this was ten minutes after he had been sighted on the surface. In the still air the sound of the gun seemed very close, and unfortunately one of my guns' crews thought we had " opened fire," and that for some reason they hadn't received the order. In consequence they started to fire. This forced my hand, and I was obliged to give the general order to " open fire," which brought all the guns into action as before. The submarine was full length on the surface, but about 1,000 yards away ;

so with the mist and swell shooting was extremely difficult. Twenty rounds were got off from the 12-pounders, and a number from the 6-pounders, Maxim, and rifles. The shooting was good under the circumstances—two distinct hits were seen in front of the conning tower, and a small explosion took place, probably of the ammunition which was at his gun. He was obviously damaged, as he appeared to lie at an awkward angle before submerging. We at once steamed to the position where he had submerged, and, as on the previous occasion, there was nothing to indicate whether he was destroyed or only damaged. Two depth charges were accordingly dropped; but, alas! no oil or anything else came to the surface of the water, which in these parts was very deep, and if he had gone right to the bottom one wouldn't expect any.

With engines stopped I remained in the vicinity for a couple of hours after the *Soerakarta* had proceeded, hoping that if he were not destroyed he would come to the surface at dark, which was now setting in, as I did not think he would let two steamers go off "scot free" if undamaged. I was rather asking for unnecessary trouble by stopping so long after our identity as a man-of-war had been disclosed, as he might have torpedoed us till we sank, but at the time I felt certain we had damaged him, if not actually destroyed him, and it struck me that if damaged he might come up at any moment "out of action"—so we didn't want

to miss the opportunity of inflicting any further damage necessary for destruction, should he do so.

This submarine is supposed to have gone on down to the mouth of the Channel and attacked other ships. Why he didn't torpedo us I don't know, but nothing further was seen or heard.

In the meantime the armed patrol trawler *Ina Williams*, who had heard our depth charges, had come up, and I sent him to board the *Soerakarta* to make sure I had not damaged the latter in any way, as she had been almost in the line of fire; and also to obtain information as to what she had seen, as she had been closer to the submarine than ourselves. The Dutchman reported that the submarine had been struck by our second shot and had sunk by the stern. They also said that the German crew who were manning the gun had been unable to regain the conning tower and had gone down with the submarine. They further stated that the submarine had fired a torpedo at us which had gone wide, but it was not seen by anyone on board.

The following account appeared in a Dutch paper on April 24th, and shows what it all looked like to them :

"The crew of the Dutch steamer *Soerakarta*, which arrived yesterday at Rotterdam from Java, were spectators off the English coast of a memorable war incident. One of the members of the crew

related the following. 'We were suddenly compelled to stop by a German submarine. The Captain obeyed the order, and the Germans told us to come to the U-boat with the ship's papers. This order was also, of course, obeyed. But scarcely was our boat let down in order to take the ship's papers to the submarine when something tremendous occurred. It was still foggy, and we suddenly saw in the obscurity a grey ship loom up. Sails on the mysterious ship were pushed aside, and at the same time some guns vomited a hellish fire. The German submarine had caught sight of the masked ship probably sooner than we, for it had launched a torpedo, which, however, went wide. Hit by the terrible fire that flew around, near us too, the German submarine sank in the deep. This war drama was over in a very short time.' "

Shortly after this the German authorities admitted, according to the Dutch paper, that the submarine engaged in stopping the *Soerakarta* was struck by shots from the British ship, but was only slightly damaged. The date of the event was given as the 13th—our action was the 15th. At the time we were unable to claim a "certainty," as there was no direct evidence of destruction in the form of oil or anything else, although this is not always essential evidence. At the same time there was the testimony of the *Soerakarta* which had no doubt about it, but then she could hardly be expected to understand much about submarines.

The chances at the time were given as 90 per cent., and a letter of appreciation was received from the Admiralty, together with the grant of £1,000 to the ship's company. Engineer Sub-Lieutenant Grant was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Distinguished Service Medal was awarded to Petty Officer Dowie of the after-gun, Stoker Petty Officer W. Fenney, and Seaman Orr. The feelings of us all on board at the time were that we weren't certain, and rejoicing was tempered with that feeling. When I came to investigate that night carefully what everyone had seen, it was extraordinary what different impressions had been left on the minds. Some had seen her go by the stern, some by the bow, some to starboard, and some to port; all had seen an explosion, which I also could vouch for, as owing to the distance and weather I was able to stand exposed on the bridge and watch through glasses. Unfortunately, it was only a small explosion, and struck me at the time, as I have mentioned, as being a box of ammunition. There are probably some who are quite positive that the submarine was destroyed, but the records show that the submarine got back all right. To what extent she was damaged, or whether any casualties were suffered, I do not know. This was the last mystery-ship action that took place in Home Waters till October.

This action is an example of how a submarine would return and report the existence of " mystery ships," thereby putting the U-boats more on their

guard and making it harder for them to be decoyed, as will be shown in later chapters, though it is quite possible in this particular case that, owing to the thick weather, the submarine had very little idea of what we looked like, and he may even have thought we were an ordinary defensively armed merchant ship. I was running no unnecessary chances, whether we had been successful or not, and by the time daylight came we looked a different ship, having brought into force one of our semi-large disguises.

Continuing cruising after this action and after calling at Queenstown to report, we had a rather unusual false alarm. One calm afternoon we sighted what we thought was the conning tower of a submarine; the alarm was sounded, everything and everyone were ready for the action. To our surprise, the submarine did not submerge, and, as we drew closer, still remained stationary. There appeared to be no doubt about it being a submarine, owing to its shape and size, and we could only conclude that she was so damaged as to be unable to dive. We therefore closed her without any great alteration of course, but, just as the order to open fire was on my tongue, I observed the "conning tower" shiver. Fire was checked for further investigation, and it turned out to be a small open boat with four men in it, who had had their vessel, a British sailing ship, sunk out in the Atlantic. They had been several days in the open, without food

or drink, and were unconscious, but had, as a last effort, hung up a coat between two perpendicular oars, which produced the resemblance to a conning tower. After nourishment they regained consciousness. One of them turned out to be an American youth, who amused us by saying he would write direct to the President to make the Germans " sit up " for torpedoing him (although he was on a

FOUR MEN ADRIFT IN A BOAT.

British ship). The Captain was quite pathetic when he described how his ship had sunk, the last thing seen being the Red Ensign at the masthead. We took them into Queenstown and had them sent ashore. I didn't worry any more about them, as I knew that, like all shipwrecked mariners landed at Queenstown during the war, they would be well looked after. Whatever the hour of the day or night Miss Voysey—the most busy war-worker in Queenstown—always found time to see they had

coffee, etc., and she was generally accompanied by the Admiral himself.

It was strange how a tragic thing such as had just happened could be combined with a humorous affair. As we were approaching the harbour (it must be remembered as an ordinary tramp), there was coming out a man-of-war—a sloop commanded by a Lieutenant enjoying his first command. We were steering on slightly converging courses, which involved risk of collision, and it was his duty, according to the "Rule of the Road," to get out of my way, but I guessed his thoughts: he expected the dirty old tramp to make room for his important command. I held on until eventually he had to alter his course, and he then passed close alongside, when he not only cursed me full and hearty for not getting out of his way, but called me all the names he could think of. The only suitable reply I could think of at the time was, that if he had only remained with his father in their greengrocer's shop, he wouldn't be displaying his ignorance of the Rule of the Road.

I had many opportunities of this sort for having quiet leg-pulls at my brother-officers, but they aren't all suitable for repeating. Sometimes I got the worst of the "back chat," when the other fellow guessed the "tramp" was not what she looked to be. This generally happened with the sloops we met at Berehaven.

It was about this time, when I had called in at

Queenstown to make my report, that another surprise was in store for us. I have already mentioned that although the ship carried over 5,000 tons of coal, she was not fitted as a collier, and the ventilation was not good. One night the coal in one of the big holds was found to be at danger heat and partially afire, so we had to set to and take out several hundred tons. It was lucky we were at Queenstown at the time, as with the expert advice of Mr. I. Bennett, the Naval Store Officer and an "honorary member" of the ship, we were able to avoid what might have been a bad fire. It meant working all night—not an uncommon thing in the Navy in wartime.

We went to sea again and cruised till early in May. The submarine activity had completely died down, and didn't start afresh for several months, for at this particular time I think the submarines had been recalled for operations in the North Sea. There was not therefore any excitement in the way of submarine hunting, but we intercepted wireless which gave us news of the Rebellion in Ireland; we hoped we would be ordered to Dublin or Galway, but the C.-in-C. had more suitable craft for that sort of job, and also a greater submarine activity might be connected with the Rebellion. Nothing came along; we were recalled to Queenstown, and had anchored in the Outer Roads, when to my surprise I saw my brother's ship, H.M.S. *Albion*, in harbour. I was surprised to see a battle-

ship there, but she was acting as guard-ship and the harbour was also being patrolled with guard-boats. I let my brother know where I was, and he came off to see me, and was thoroughly disgusted at my "get-up": I was wearing a moustache. He invited me to dine with him, which I did, and spent many hours yarning. I think the guard-boat was rather surprised at seeing a boat going to the Outer Roads at 1 a.m., and still more surprised when the answer to the hail was "Master of s.s. *Farnborough*."

SPINNING ANY YARN THEY LIKED.

After a few days at Queenstown and when everything was quiet again we sailed for Plymouth, to enjoy our four days' leave and a refit, and to spin such yarns as fertile brains could concoct.

This four days' leave had been granted as part of our reward for sinking U.68, and I had been enjoined to impress on my crew the necessity for secrecy in connection with their awards, etc. But it seemed to me to send a man on leave with a decoration on his chest, a portion of bounty in his

pocket, and make him promise not to tell anything to his wife and (or) sweetheart was asking too much of human nature. I therefore told them what they were *not* to say, such as our methods, locality, date, number of submarine, etc., but outside of that they could spin any yarn they liked to account for their rewards. Knowing what imagination sailors have, I have often thought that it may have been through this that all kinds of extraordinary yarns were started and believed—such as bombs disguised as babies being thrown down conning towers. Though this particular yarn may be true as far as I know, it certainly had no connection with us. I went ashore wearing my " brass hat " and Commander's rank for the first time, but I was also wearing a very fine ginger beard which I was very proud of. I expected my wife would greet me in the approved picture-paper fashion, by throwing her arms around my neck and weeping down my back, but not a bit of it—all I got was, " Shave off that dirty thing at once, and then I will kiss you." What a reward for my labours !

The crew always enjoyed Plymouth, as I was able to give a lot of leave. We lay with other men-of-war, and used to wear uniform. One of my officers happened to be the son of a publican, and he returned from leave with two large bottles of champagne bulging out of his pockets. He reported himself, and said he wished me to accept them, as they were the best in his father's house.

I had to send for him in my cabin and point out that he had infringed two regulations, firstly in bringing wine aboard in a non-authorised way, and secondly for offering his Captain presents. He was profuse with apologies and pleaded ignorance, which I quite believed; so I told him he could either take them ashore again or officially enter them in the wardroom stores and keep them for

"LAYING AT ANCHOR."

the whole mess to enjoy if we got another submarine. Some few days later he came to dine with myself and wife. He arrived with a little brown bag, which he handed to my wife, and said, "I have looked up the regulations, and find that although I may not give these to the Captain, they say nothing about his wife." Needless to say we had a very cheery supper party.

Much not only to my own, but to the whole ship's regret, I had to send Beswick to hospital.

He together with Truscott had really had the hardest work of all ; it didn't matter what had to be done, they were always there, and Beswick had unfortunately found the strain too much. I was indeed sorry to lose him, a fine seaman and a good pal. They always say that no man is so good that he can't be replaced, and I was lucky in running across Ronald Stuart, of the Canadian Pacific Line, a different type of man, but equally efficient. He had the advantage of having everything in running order, instead of starting at the beginning, as Beswick had to do, and so was " on the top line " by the time we sailed.

Another change also took place, the Q-ship title having come into being, we now officially became H.M.S. Q.5, which was the address used on our letters, they being sent from the Admiralty under cover to the Mail Officer at Queenstown. We ourselves were known as " Admiralty Collier Q.5 " for the purposes of going in and out of naval ports. I remember my mother had been rather worried about addressing my letters to s.s. *Farnborough* without any naval rank. When I got promoted and was awarded the D.S.O., she came to the conclusion I must be on a dangerous job ; previously she was not quite certain whether I had disgraced the family or what was going on. I was now able to write that my full style and title could be placed on my letters, as I had left the s.s. *Farnborough* and gone to H.M.S. Q.5. The reply I

got was, "You naughty boy, you have gone from one dangerous job to a worse one, a horrible submarine." On becoming H.M.S. Q.5 we also became an independent command, which was a great improvement in every way. It meant I had a Purser on board of my own—whom I have already referred to and shall do so again. This made us now entirely independent of *Colleen* for pay or anything else. I had long asked for this arrangement, but it is rather unusual for a ship with a small ship's company, such as a destroyer, to have a Paymaster; but then, we weren't a usual ship, and it was obvious that a lot of correspondence with a parent ship was undesirable from every point of view.

CHAPTER VIII

CHASING A MINELAYER

We left Plymouth just after the Battle of Jutland and returned to Queenstown. As there was no submarine activity on at all, we were ordered up harbour. The Admiral had a habit of going aboard his ships at any time without notice, but I was rather taken aback one quiet afternoon to walk into one of the gun cabins to find the C.-in-C. there, and although we didn't up harbour have a man-o'-war "look-out" walking up and down, I took the precaution in future of having a "spy."

On June 6th we were lying peacefully at our buoy and wondering if the submarine warfare would start again, when I got a message to say the Admiral wished to see me. This was about four o'clock, and I went straight up the hill to report. He told me that the *Hampshire* had been sunk with Lord Kitchener on board, and that she had probably been torpedoed, in which case the submarine would probably be on its way south down the west coast, and he wanted me to go and look for it.

It is difficult to realise what a great shock the death of Lord Kitchener was to the country and

individual. I went straight on board, and in an hour or so we were at sea, the men full of enthusiasm and also that horrible word "revenge." We steamed as hard as we could towards the west coast and then up it, getting as far as Galway, but without any further news of the submarine. Soon after we received information that the disaster was due to a mine, and we reluctantly gave up the hunt, but remained at sea, as it was better than being in harbour, even though unfortunately—from our point of view—there were no submarines about at this time. Yet as a result of the Irish Rebellion which had recently taken place a sharp look-out was being kept for raiders and gun-runners. These ships were ostensibly merchant ships like ourselves, but the raiders were generally heavily armed, and went all over the world attacking our ships by gunfire, torpedoes, and mines; it was not their practice to operate in coastal waters, except by mines, as the risk of a counter-attack would be too great. Although we, as I will mention later, only once deliberately went after one, yet we were always on the look-out when we saw anything suspicious about a steamer or its course, and would get all our ammunition up and the hoses running water on the deck in case of fire.

We chiefly expected gun-runners on the Irish coast, and these probably would be lightly armed or unarmed. We had the experience of both suspecting and being suspected.

Chasing a Minelayer

It was on the occasion mentioned above that when proceeding up the west coast of Ireland we sighted a steamer which at once excited our suspicion. She was flying a red ensign, a thing British ships never did at that time ; she was also steering on a course that only led to a small uninhabited bay on the west coast. These two circumstances were sufficient to make her very suspect. Had I been a man-of-war, outwardly as well as inwardly, I should have chased and boarded her at once. As it was we were in the awkward position of being (outwardly) a neutral steamer. Needless to say, our real selves asserted themselves ; the guns were brought to the ready and everything was prepared for an attack. A slight alteration of course was drawing us closer, and our procedure presently would have been to run up the White Ensign and order her to stop, taking care that the position was advantageous to us. As we approached, I was watching her every movement and detail, but suddenly beheld " bluejackets' service flannels " hanging up to dry. That gave the show away, and she was obviously one of our own " mystery " ships. This turned out definitely to be the case, and she had just come on to the station and we knew nothing about her.

Here is an example of the great care in detail that was necessary for a decoy ship to take so as to avoid suspicion. On another occasion at a much later date I met a steamer in the vicinity of the place

where Casement was landed in Ireland. She was a neutral, and aroused our suspicion so much that I eventually, after loading the guns, hoisted the White Ensign, ordered her to stop, and sent an officer to board her—but she proved to be "in order."

The reverse case happened to us shortly afterwards. We were steaming towards the Bristol Channel under neutral colours in rather thick weather; when it eventually cleared we found ourselves nearer the Channel than we expected. Observing our rule, we did not wish to alter course in daylight, for there was always the off-chance that a submarine was watching; on the other hand, if we continued our course and speed, we would hit the land in the Bristol Channel before dark. I therefore reduced our speed to 6 knots. Shortly after this we met four British trawlers on patrol. We had a copy of their signal books on board, and were, therefore, able to read the signals that the Senior Officer made to his flotilla, and they caused us much amusement. His total armament was only four 6-pounders, and we could easily have sunk the lot. The trawlers obviously suspected us, as the signal was made for two to take up positions on either of my bows and then "Prepare for action." We could see the men getting their boxes of ammunition on to their forecastles already for the action with the "raider."

A signal was made to us to "Stop instantly,"

which we at once obeyed, and we saw the senior officer—a Lieutenant R.N.R.—himself coming over to board us. As it happened, one of my officers spoke the language of the nationality we were assuming, and I sent him to the ladder to spout

GETTING READY FOR ACTION.

it at the officer on his arrival. By an extraordinary coincidence, the boarding officer also spoke it, and it made him all the more sure we were a raider. I could see by his face when he came on board that he quite expected to be shot on the spot, and I thought it very plucky of him to have come on board. He had, of course, left orders to his command as to what to do if he didn't return.

Once aboard I had him brought to my cabin,

told him who we were and asked him to maintain secrecy and tell his fellows we were all right. On inquiring why he suspected us, he said he was on the look-out for raiders, and our slow speed had made him suspect we were hanging about waiting for darkness—which we certainly were—but not for the purpose he quite naturally and rightly thought.

All June and July passed without any further excitement, as there were no submarines about. The weather was at last very pleasant, but for long stretches we were fogbound. We spent some of the time at Milford Haven: we had used Berehaven so much that a change of base temporarily was desirable, especially after the Rebellion.

Milford Haven was not a bad place to lie at, and we were able to get country walks on the opposite side to Old Milford, but it had the disadvantage of being some distance to the sea and a nasty place to get out of in a fog.

Whilst lying here we got sudden orders to proceed to Lough Swilly, and had to struggle out of harbour and up the Irish Sea in one of the dense fogs which were so frequent that year. We, of course, all wondered what the meaning of this sudden movement was, as we had never been to Lough Swilly before, but it soon became clear. It was at this time the German submarine *Deutschland* made her famous trip to New York, and the C.-in-C. Queenstown decided to use all his decoy ships—about

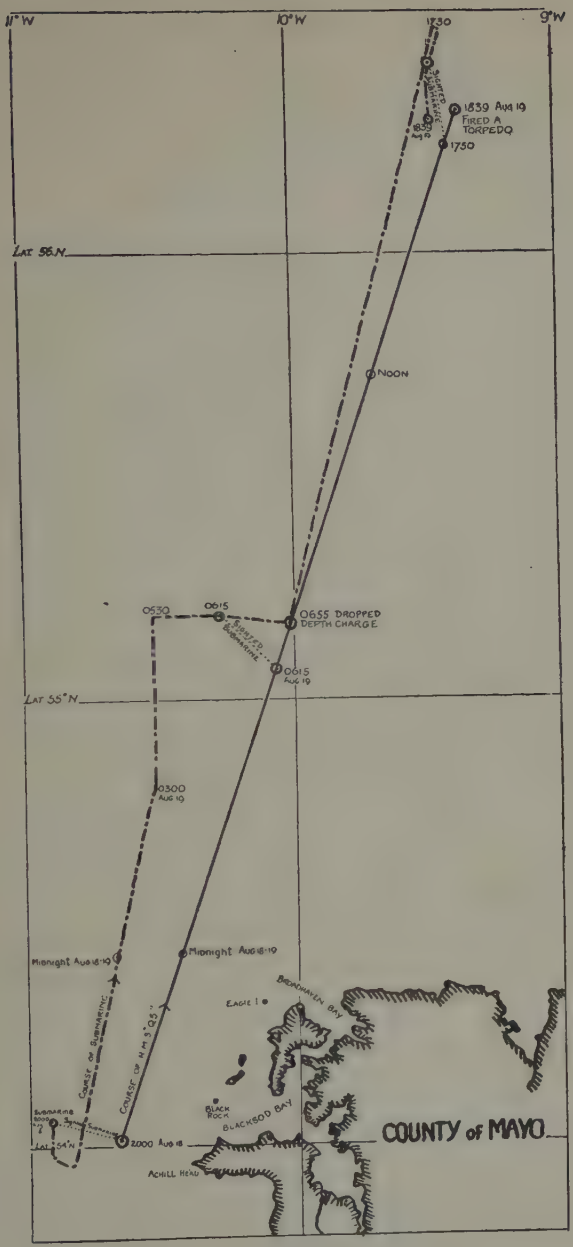
twelve—so as to try to intercept her on her homeward voyage. It was for this purpose that we went to Lough Swilly ready to sail as soon as the *Deutschland* left New York. We sailed on August 5th, and made our way into the Atlantic as far west as 30°, and then, after making various calculations, we got on to a " Great Circle " course such as we expected she would take. The *Deutschland* was an unarmed ship, and there was really little likelihood of getting her, unless caught unawares at night or in thick weather, as otherwise she could always submerge as soon as she sighted a steamer ; also, as she was a merchant submarine, we couldn't have sunk her on sight. We should have been obliged to hoist the White Ensign, ordered her to stop, and could only have taken offensive action had she tried to escape. The weather was bad, and there was little hope of seeing her, but we heard suspicious wireless signals close to us, and kept on till we got to the Rockall Bank. This we reached at dark, and we then heard apparently German wireless quite close to us. Although we only had negative results, we hoped that we might have assisted towards locating her track.

There was nothing further to be done, and we set our course southward, when a more interesting chase unexpectedly came to us.

At 8 p.m. on the 18th—our thirteenth day out—we were steaming south, disguised as a neutral, when a submarine was sighted nearly on the port

beam, about five miles distant and steering on an opposite and parallel course at an estimated speed of 9 knots. It was just on sunset, and we were showing well up against the setting sun. He, on the other hand, was only indistinctly visible against the land. We continued on our course without taking any notice, and put on our steaming lights at the usual time. It soon became obvious that he didn't intend to attack us, as he remained steaming northward on the surface, and there could be no doubt about us being very plainly visible. As no submarine activity had been reported for several months, we came to the conclusion that he must be an odd submarine of the minelayer type, that had been south, laid mines, and was now returning home.

We therefore decided to try to intercept him during the night or the following morning. At 8.25, as darkness set in and he was just getting out of sight, we slowly started to turn round, and by 8.45, when it was quite dark and he could not have seen our lights any more, we darkened ship and headed north at full speed to intercept him. The stokers fired up for all they were worth, and we got 8·2 knots out of the old ship—the best she had ever done. During the night we made slight alterations in the appearance of the ship, so that he wouldn't recognise us again. German wireless was heard close to us during the night, and we had great hopes of encountering him. I made a slight alteration of course at 3 a.m. after having checked our position,



PLAN OF CHASING A SUBMARINE.

but at daybreak he was nowhere in sight. We therefore concluded that our only chance was that he was not going so fast as we had allowed, and we must be ahead of him. The allowance we had given of 9 knots was the maximum we expected a mine-layer to go, and had he been going this, he should theoretically have been in sight. We therefore laid off a new track for him at 7 knots, and put him on a course for St. Kilda, a spot German submarines frequently made for. At 5.30 a.m. we altered course to the eastward (see plan) on a track that a ship from America to Liverpool would be taking. This was a bold alteration of course to make in more or less daylight, but any other course, likely to intercept him, would have led me to " nowhere," and this would of course have aroused suspicion. I felt as certain as I could be that, if in sight, he would be on the surface ; taking this into consideration, and the fact that there were no reports of any submarines operating in these waters, nor had been for some months, I decided to make the alteration. If our new estimate was correct, we ought to intercept him at 6.15, and sure enough at 6.15 we sighted him on the starboard bow, now about five miles distant, still on the surface and steering northward. He remained in sight on the surface for some minutes, and careful bearings were taken, which indicated that if we both continued our courses we would meet. He then submerged.

The question now arose as to what to do. Judging

from the previous night, he had no intention of attacking, and from what we now saw, he apparently had no guns. The only way to get at him was to attempt depth charges. This was rather a forlorn hope, as it was 6.50 before we got to a position where he might reasonably be; and it was very rough guesswork, as, our speed being so slow, there was no question of making a dash like a destroyer could have made. Anyhow, there being no signs of a torpedo or even a periscope, the White Ensign was hoisted and a depth charge was dropped without any visible result.

He now knew what we were, and we had apparently shot our bolt. Our present course was at right angles to his, and so would take us away from him for good and all; to alter round towards his course would leave no doubt in his mind as to our identity, even if he didn't connect the depth charge with us, which was highly improbable.

Loath to leave our quarry, we altered on to his course to the northward and proceeded at full speed: he was running submerged, and his speed would probably not be more than 4 or 5 knots, so we knew we were rapidly drawing ahead. Our hope was sooner or later to catch him on the surface within gun range—or ram him.

It was seven o'clock in the morning when we turned northward. During the day the appearance of the ship was again altered, careful watch having been kept all day to see that he didn't come up on

the surface astern. The neutral appearance of the ship had been removed, the funnel had changed its colour, and we now sailed as a British collier with no colours flying.

By 5.30 p.m. we estimated to be about ten miles ahead of him and out of sight. We therefore turned round and took an outward and southerly course, in order to meet him again. At 5.50 p.m. he was sighted nearly right ahead on the horizon, heading towards us and apparently charging his batteries. He remained in sight for ten minutes and then submerged. At the moment of sighting him a defect occurred in our main engines and we had to stop, but we were able to go ahead again in ten minutes. Luckily we were able to keep our head in the same direction, so that the breakdown had no effect beyond the thrill of having the enemy in sight and our engines disabled at the same time.

Forty minutes later—at 6.39 p.m.—just at the time we estimated to be passing him, and our eyes were searching for his periscope, a torpedo was fired at us from the port beam at about 800 yards' range. We continued our course, but it missed ahead of us: a very bad shot on his part, as the conditions were good. There was no sign of the periscope and nothing for an attempt to ram, so it only remained to continue our course and pray he would come up, which he didn't.

We were now steaming on opposite courses

and increasing our distance more rapidly, so we reduced speed till 7.10 p.m., by which time we estimated again to be out of sight, turned north once more to his course, and proceeded at full speed, hoping with the gathering darkness and mist (which was setting in) to get on top of him as he came to the surface at dusk. No signs of him were seen, and during the night we steamed as hard as we could to the northward, as he would still be ahead of us. All lights were extinguished, and we again altered the appearance of the ship, for the third time in twenty-four hours. Our great donkey-boiler funnel which had been prominent before now no longer existed ; the awning stanchions likewise vanished, and the funnel assumed yet another hue. At daylight the horizon was scanned, and we thought we saw him right ahead on the horizon, but too far away for anything more to be done, and we reluctantly turned our nose homeward.

It had been a long and exciting chase against what was, as we had diagnosed, a submarine minelayer, which had laid his eggs off the south of Ireland and was now returning home. He had no guns to attack us with, and was probably in a hurry to get back, so would not use his torpedoes except for a golden opportunity. This we offered him, but he missed, and there was no other way to decoy him. The amount of work put in by our small crew can easily be guessed : in addition to our " full speed trial," the guns were kept ready and

manned all the time, the funnel repainted three different colours, whilst structural changes were also made. On the way south I decided to put into use one of our " big " disguises, as there was no knowing what description might have been taken of us when we dropped the depth charge. We anchored off the coast out of sight of land during dark hours for the purpose.

On August 22nd, when the C.-in-C. was surveying Queenstown harbour from Admiralty House before breakfast, he wanted to know what " that big timber ship " was lying out in the roads, stacked with timber, having stump masts and a slight list. None of the staff seemed to know, and were busy telephoning to the Examination Steamer, when I turned up and reported s.s. *Farnborough* arrived !

Admiral Bayly was very interested in our chase, and I had to go through the details with him and Admiral Bradford, who happened to be staying at Admiralty House. I have already said how Admiral Bayly was a man who knew war, and he carried it to his house. The large billiard-room, which had afforded many pleasant hours of recreation, was converted into an " operation-room " : the billiard table was boarded over, and on it placed the large-scale charts. It was here that I had to lay off my courses and explain my action. The Admiral was very pleased, and thought we had been very skilful and shown good nerve, which the Admiralty concurred in. Although our attempt to find the

Deutschland and our chase of the submarine minelayer were unsuccessful, he felt we might have gained some useful information.

After a few days' rest in harbour we were off to sea again, our appetites being once more whetted, after a dull three months, not only by our recent chase, but also by the fact that in September the submarine " season " started again and continued till the end of the war.

The " timber-ship " disguise was very nice for recreation inside the timber, but could not be used for long, owing to the absence of any large numbers of such vessels at sea ; and the few there were were generally Scandinavian.

We didn't have long to wait before realising that the activity was in earnest again. The usual S.O.S. signals were received, and numerous ships reported sightings ; but very few from our favourite area. The centre of activity seemed to be the approaches to the English Channel, and we therefore went on a course which pretended to take us from Cardiff to Bilbao. On entering the Bay of Biscay, one of our gallant allies in the shape of a French trawler ordered us to stop and sent an officer to board us. His English was poor and my French was worse, but I tried to make him understand we were allies and both out to hunt the submarines. I thought I had convinced him ; he returned to his ship and I proceeded ahead, only to receive a further peremptory signal to stop instantly, which we at

once obeyed and got boarded by the same officer. I gathered that his Captain wasn't satisfied, and that I must follow him to Brest. This didn't suit us at all, but, as all argument seemed hopeless, I eventually took the officer to one of our gun-houses and showed him a 12-pounder. Pointing to his 6-pounder I suggested we might sink him. No further argument was necessary, as in a few seconds he was speeding his way back home, and we continued our course.

I sent a wireless message reporting the incident to avoid any chance of confusion, should he report us as a raider.

On returning from this cruise, we ran into a dense fog, during which we heard gunfire; so shaping course for the sound, and with our guns loaded, we steamed for about an hour and came across a Swedish steamer aboard which bombs had been placed by a submarine, which had ordered the Swedes to abandon ship. We were able to save the crew, which included two ladies, and were lying off the ship in their boats. As may be imagined, we didn't particularly welcome passengers on board, especially females, since we were hoping any minute that the submarine would come up and offer to place bombs in us. Anyhow, we couldn't leave them in their open boats, though I felt tempted to make use of our orders about women not being allowed on board. Although I sent a party on board the ship in the hopes of towing

her, the Master reported she was sinking too rapidly and we presently saw her go down.

We were fairly close to the Scilly Islands, and a wireless signal brought out some trawlers which relieved us of our impediment! We seemed to be in the thick of things now, when we suddenly got recalled to Queenstown and, much to our disgust, found we had to sail as soon as possible for Bermuda. It seemed bad luck, after several months of cruising with only the odd chance of success (owing to the absence of submarines), that we should have to go thousands of miles away just when the submarine warfare was in full swing again.

Apparently the " papers " about our coal having been afire several months previously had trickled through, and the Admiralty decided that we must discharge our coal, and Bermuda and Halifax being the two naval bases nearest to Canada, we were ordered to discharge at Bermuda and load timber at Quebec, and the *Zylpha*, who was carrying a cargo of coal like us, was ordered to Halifax and Montreal. The change of cargo from coal to timber was undoubtedly a most advantageous one, and I believe that as far as possible decoy ships hereafter were filled with wood or some such substance.

We too should have liked it when we first started in 1915, but now to have to go and fetch it, when in the " throes " of activity, did not greatly appeal to us, but after-events will show it was undoubtedly a good thing the change of cargo took place.

Anyhow, there was no good wasting time about it, and as soon as we got the orders we buzzed round to get on with the job and get back again to the "danger zone." I hoped to get through with it in a month or six weeks, and little thought that events would arise to prevent our return to our old haunts for several months.

Charts had to be obtained, and as much fresh food as we could carry, which in fact was rather less than our usual supply, as we had no refrigerators or ice machines on board. I also applied for and was thankful to receive a sick-berth rating—at a later date he was replaced by a Surgeon Probationer. This was the first time we had carried any "medical" staff, but in view of possible sickness aboard I thought it desirable, and he proved most useful.

CHAPTER IX

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

We sailed for Bermuda as soon as possible, in order to get there and back in the shortest time. The crew, like all crews, were a little shy of changing C.-in-C.'s, but, as luck would have it, we were now going to serve temporarily under Admiral Sir Montague Browning, and I was able, when telling my crew of where we were going to, also to tell them that we were going under a C.-in-C. who would be as keen as we were to get us back to the "front." And although a change in the situation eventually necessitated us staying away longer than anticipated, yet Admiral Browning did all he could to get us to whatever area there seemed most likelihood of us being useful. When once clear of the submarine zone, our cruising became less strenuous, as special look-outs, etc., were removed, and we jogged along at 7·5 knots. It was nice that we were now able to use our wireless for receiving any general news of the world's doings. We didn't expect to see any submarines outside the recognised area round the British Isles coast, and little thought that one was speeding her way across

the Atlantic Ocean at much the same time as we were. Our look-out was chiefly for raiders, but as it happened we never sighted a single ship in the whole of our passage.

We rigged our "flush-deck" disguise, which enabled the men to have an open-air recreation space, and this, in the heat, was most desirable. As many men as liked could come out at the same time, have a smoke, and get a breath of fresh air, the main decks being uncomfortably crowded, especially in the hot weather. Deck quoits and other such games could also be played, and I instituted physical drill to keep the men fit, as I was frightened of having illness in our crowded quarters. Before reaching Bermuda, we had ceased to be the *Farnborough* or Q.5, and again became *Loderer*. We did this because *Loderer* was in the Lloyd's Register Book and *Farnborough* was not. On arrival at the different ports, the name would be entered in the Shipping News of the local papers as "s.s. *Loderer*, Master, Gordon Campbell, arrived from overseas." It would have been awkward to have had a name that didn't appear in Lloyd's.

In view of the fact that we should be going into ports where mystery ships were not even hinted at, and we should be getting labourers, longshoremen, etc., on board in connection with our cargo, extra precautions had to be taken so as to make the ship "tramp-like," not only outwardly but inwardly. Before reaching Bermuda, therefore, we dismounted

all the guns, unrigged all the fittings, removed all the ammunition, etc., and had everything stowed away out of sight. The wheel-house, cabins, and hen-coop maintained their appearance of being what they were supposed to be. I saw one person on board try to walk into one of the cabin gun-houses, but as the door that he was trying happened to be the dummy one (merely painted as such with a handle), he didn't get in and appeared merely to think it was locked. Personally I spent most of the time reading up all the mercantile procedure I was likely to run up against in overseas ports. As I would have to load a cargo for the first time and therefore had to be acquainted with such terms as demurrage, etc., I found my time was not wasted, and I learnt a lot of useful information.

In visiting ports overseas, one is always required to produce a " bill of health," and the usual procedure was for the Medical Officer to come on board and ask to see the crew. For this eventuality we had to practise a new " drill." It must be remembered that we had nearly eighty men on board, instead of the thirty-two we should have had as an ordinary steamer, so we had to arrange that when the Doctor came to see me, I would tell him I had thirty-two men on board (which was the truth) and all well. When he asked to see them, I would shout to Stuart and say, " Mr. Mate, all hands on deck." He would go along " calling the hands," and thirty-two would muster, the remainder hiding.

It would have been very awkward if the wrong number had turned up, but luckily we never had any trouble: the crew could be relied on for any novel drill or deception required of them. Our deck log was also always ready for inspection, for ever since we started I had only kept the log as an ordinary merchant-ship log, and nothing was ever entered in it that would reveal us as a man-of-war or be of use to the enemy in the event of loss. I personally kept a private record of all our doings, but this was only taken out of the safe when I was actually writing; unfortunately this record was destroyed on an occasion when I had to order the safe to be thrown overboard, otherwise it would have been a far more complete record than I shall ever remember in detail, as it contained, amongst other things, the exact names of every ship we impersonated. Such written orders as I had to issue or any official caution I might have to give were also kept in a special book in the safe. The safe itself was hidden away in my cabin.

We got through all the formalities at Bermuda all right and proceeded alongside to discharge all our coal. The pilot came aboard at the outer entrance and took us through the narrows, a process of over an hour. How I hated pilots, especially this one, who had friends at Cardiff and wanted to talk about them. Cardiff was a place I had never been to, but on this occasion I was able to switch one of my officers, who had been there, on to him, whilst

I found important work in the chart-house! Luckily we found on arrival that H.M.S. *Cæsar* and *Isis* were in harbour, and assisted us to discharge our coal, large working parties being sent aboard from both. At this time I was wearing my nice ginger moustache and no beard. The First Lieutenant of the *Isis*, who was an old shipmate of mine, was working on board our ship, so I invited him to my cabin without disclosing my identity. The following day he invited me aboard the *Isis* and took me to the wardroom, and I pretended to feel a bit strange in my surroundings as the skipper of a dirty collier might do. I finally told him who I was, and got at once much sympathy, as he jumped to the conclusion that I had been " chucked out of the Service " and joined a tramp. His discomfort was further increased when I went with him to his cabin to meet his wife, whom I also knew, and I continued to spin a yarn of how jolly hard it was for a budding naval officer to find himself in a collier during the Great War. Anyhow, they were good enough, for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, to invite me to supper at their house. This incident at least went to suggest that there wasn't much to be seen on board that was different from an ordinary collier.

Our last night at Bermuda was a strenuous one, as we had arranged to sail at daylight and the holds still had to be " swept "—a tedious performance, but we had worked night and day all the time and so

were used to it, and we just got finished in time. At midnight we discovered our cook was missing: this was rather disconcerting. He had been given leave till 10 p.m. and, being a reliable man, it never entered my head he could have "kicked over the traces," but about 2 a.m. we got news that he was locked up in the local prison, and I had to send an officer over to bail him out for 4*s*. It was a long trip to Hamilton, the chief town of Bermuda, where he had been locked up, and we got him aboard in the nick of time before sailing, but I am afraid he didn't answer to his bail, as I couldn't delay the ship and I couldn't do without a cook. The man, as a matter of fact, had been drugged, and on coming round discovered that all his money, some £10, was missing—a lesson of what sometimes happens to merchant seamen.

Having got rid of our cargo of coal, we sailed for Quebec in ballast. I had never sailed "in ballast" before, and was a bit anxious of our stability, especially as we had so many extra weights on our upper deck. I therefore housed the topmasts and kept as much coal in the lower part of the bunkers as possible. We were favoured with good weather except for rain and fog, and all went well. When going up the St. Lawrence we got news of U.53 having appeared off New York and made a great attack on shipping. This being the first time an armed submarine had gone so far afield, it caused great alarm. The pilot was terrified at the thoughts

of them coming to the Gulf. At Bermuda I had found it difficult enough talking to the pilot for nearly two hours, and now I had nearly twenty-four hours of it. For a naval officer to go on talking on the bridge, without using any naval terms or making any reference to the Navy—except ones which will not cause any suspicion—was rather an ordeal, and I am afraid I had to tell many lies in the " execution of my office," but the Medical Officer here put me in rather a tight corner. Having told him all about my thirty-two men, instead of seeing them he asked me to sign a form which had words to this effect, " I swear by Almighty God that I have . . . men on board and no more." This was rather a tall order, so I told him I had another lot of men on board who belonged to the Admiralty, that I had brought them up from Bermuda, and no doubt they were for the British cruiser refitting at Montreal—50 per cent. truth and 50 per cent. imagination. Anyhow, he accepted it cheerfully, and being an Admiralty collier and wartime, there was no cause for it to arouse undue suspicion.

On making fast alongside at Quebec I employed two tugs, payment for which I signed for as an Admiralty ship, and found I got a " commission " on it. I was at first aghast at the thoughts of taking a commission, having been brought up under the Naval Discipline Act, but I found I should cause suspicion if I didn't, so pocketed it. This process also applied to bunker coal, water, etc., and the

Red Cross Fund made a nice *pourboire* out of our ship.

After going through the necessary formalities with the Customs, Harbour Master, and so on, I went to the Naval Transport Officer. He knew nothing about us, but said he was delighted an Admiralty ship had arrived, as he wanted to use her for cinema purposes! I think the idea was to take a scene of embarkation of Canadian troops arriving aboard. I had to protest most violently before I choked him off.

My next call was on the Head of the Police. I told him exactly who I was, producing necessary evidence of my rank. It was very necessary for me to ensure that no bombs or such-like were placed aboard my ship, so I got him to supply plain-clothes detectives to keep an eye aboard. And although my crew were thoroughly to be trusted, yet I knew from my own experience it is very difficult to pretend you have no connection with the Navy for long periods at a time, and I therefore arranged that if any of my men were heard saying a word about the Navy he was to be arrested on a charge of embezzlement or anything else they liked, and I would bail the man out. One unfortunate man was arrested under this head because he was heard carrying on a harmless conversation about Dreadnoughts. But one of the detectives nearly got had too. I, of course, hadn't told a soul about them, and Mr. Mate came to me one day and said

he had seen a " suspicious " man on several occasions loitering about the ship, and he thought he had better have him arrested. I had a look at the " suspect " and told him to do nothing !

My Purser, Nunn, was rather a trial to me during this cruise, when we were in harbour, as, although a most excellent fellow both in himself and at his job, he was one of those fellows who liked to match his socks with his shirt and tie—most unsuitable in our job—and I had the greatest difficulty to make him look his part. All of us now had beards or moustaches, but I don't think Nunn could produce anything better than a subaltern's. It was painful to him to have to be and look untidy, but a good deal of chaff did the trick.

All the loading of the timber, which was in big baulks at Quebec, was done by longshoremen, and the job was to keep our own men out of sight. In order to meet this difficulty I used to send half the men ashore very early before anyone was about, and they would return after dark. Of course they would go and return in driblets, and not as one mass. The excursions of the U.53 off New York and the large number of ships she had sunk had caused a good deal of alarm on the whole east coast of America and Canada, and had shown that there was no place safe from the submarine's activity.

Whilst at Quebec I received a letter sent by hand from the C.-in-C. at Halifax—Admiral Sir Montague

Browning—telling me that he anticipated submarine operations in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and wanting me to patrol the Gulf as long as I could. The necessity for great secrecy was obvious, and he did not wish us to anchor in any port unless necessary. We were just going to sail for England when the order was received, and had only twelve days' provisions on board ; but to obtain a lot more might arouse suspicion, as the Shipping Authorities knew we were bound for England, and it had been in the local papers. I therefore decided to sail short. The next difficulty was to get our guns remounted and everything ready for action before getting past the Narrows. Pilotage was compulsory, and a pilot on board was bound to see us working on them. Something had to be left to chance. I had an excellent Navigator, Lieutenant Hereford, R.N.R., who had joined me after serving with the K.R.R. in France, and I decided to slip after dark with no pilot. This we did, but after a couple of hours I began to regret it, for it came on to rain in torrents, and as the channel was very narrow and tricky, and we couldn't see the light-buoys, there was nothing for it but to anchor, and a more miserable night I have seldom spent. We found ourselves very close to a bluff, and had we swung round we should have hit the rocks. We got under way before daylight, but had to anchor a second time for dense fog, during which time we made everything ready for action and did a bit of drill to get

our hands in. The fog therefore was rather a piece of good fortune for us.

I explained to my crew what was on, and that if necessary we should continue our patrol till we burnt all our coal, which would last twenty-three days. (We had, of course, no cargo of coal to fall back on, all the holds being full to the hatches with our timber.) This would mean going on half rations, as we had only twelve days' food on board, but the thoughts of decoying a submarine in the Gulf of St. Lawrence aroused so much enthusiasm and seemed to tickle the crew so much that any other consideration, such as full rations, didn't matter. The officers and men shared alike, and all our mouths watered at the thoughts of either steak or fish for breakfast. Unfortunately the submarine never came, so we cruised between Cape Race and Father Point for twenty-three days without an alarm of any sort. It was bitterly cold and we had fog or snow every day. I have already mentioned that we had no heating apparatus aboard, and it was a very long three weeks ; the nights were long, but we always found some work to do after dark—not that it was always necessary—but it was a good thing to have something to do. The navigational part of the patrol kept me fairly occupied, as it is not a nice part of the world to navigate in. Eventually we arrived at Halifax with less than a day's coal on board, no provisions, and the engine only just going round, as we were long overdue for

our refit and our bearings were in a bad way. Our trip from the Gulf to Halifax was both exciting and alarming, as we ran into a very dense fog and it seemed rather a toss-up as to whether we should go aground or run out of coal and/or provisions. To reduce the chance of the latter I didn't stop, although none too sure at times of our position. It was a mercy to us all when we made the harbour.

I was more proud than ever of my crew, for although we had had a pretty hard time, as things go nowadays, they remained cheerful throughout, and each day had the same humorous frame of mind at the thoughts of the enemy running up against a mystery ship in the Gulf.

On arrival at Halifax the secrecy had been so much maintained that we were anchored at the outmost limits, no special orders having been received about us, and in due course a picket-boat from H.M.S. *Niobe* came alongside to say the Captain of the Dockyard wished to see the Master. Donning my bowler hat and red tie to meet this big naval man, I got down into the boat and asked the bluejacket in the stern if smoking was allowed in the Navy boats (knowing perfectly well it isn't or wasn't). " Certainly," he said, and sitting down beside me he took off his cap and offered me a woodbine. Having lit my pipe and he his fag, he proceeded to tell me exactly what he thought about the Navy in general and naval officers in particular. On nearing the *Niobe* he gave me a nudge, and said,

" 'Ere, skipper, knock your pipe out." I said, " Why ? " He replied, " Well, I expect that —— Commander is looking through his scuttle, and if he sees us smoking that means 10A for me."

Having made ourselves known to the Dockyard, we speedily got everything done for us in the way of a good billet up harbour, replenishing stores and getting some repairs done. We found that one " slip-up " had been made in the " secrecy "— probably as usual through over-secrecy. Our letters had been re-directed from England, some to s.s. *Loderer* as they should have been, some to s.s. *Farnborough*, and some to H.M.S. Q.5 ! There was only one thing to be done, and that was to let the people who had handled the letters into our secret and ask them to keep it. It was found that the main shaft bearings were in a bad way, and required fairly large repairs, but we had orders to go to Bermuda again, and were anxious to get on without waiting for repairs ; so, after a few days' rest and temporary repairs, we set course for Bermuda again, though we had to stop every day for an hour to give the Chief a chance with his engines ; the hoses were also kept running on the bearings all the time to reduce the heat.

Whilst we were at Halifax, the Engineer-Captain of the yard, who, of course, had to know all about us, kindly invited me to dinner at his house. There was also there a Post-Captain in command of the armed liner that had recently brought the new

Governor-General of Canada over. I acted my part as Master, and he never bowled it out, till after dinner I told him who I was. He was one of those who knew of the term "mystery ship," but not "Q-ship." He told me how, before having left England, he had been told officially that two Q-ships had been sent to Halifax, and he would probably meet them. He thought "Q" must be some wonderful new fast destroyer or something for the Canadian Navy, and on approaching Halifax at 20 odd knots he told the Governor-General he was expecting to meet two very fast "Q" ships who would escort them in!

A rather unusual thing happened on our passage from Halifax to Bermuda, and that was the arrival of an owl, which flew on board, although we were over a hundred miles from the land. It unfortunately did not live to see land again, and we were unable to keep it till we got to harbour to have it stuffed as a mascot—or to replace the parrot.

On arrival at the Outer Roads of Bermuda we were boarded by a very zealous officer. Thinking that on this occasion he knew of our arrival, I said, "Special service for Admiralty." Not accepting this, he boarded and asked, "What cargo?" I replied, "Coal," and of course one lie led to another. Where from? Obviously Cardiff. How many days out? Obviously thirteen. On further demand I produced my old bill of lading for 5,071 tons of coal, my faked sailing orders, which I always carried

about with me from place to place, and reported nothing of interest on voyage out, etc., etc. Luckily I had a calendar in front of me when he asked what day we had sailed, and was able to work back thirteen days. He then asked if I had an English newspaper of that day, as it was one day later than theirs. We, of course, hadn't had an English paper for two months, but I shouted for a man on the bridge and said, "Nip down to the Purser and see if he has that *Daily Mail* the pilot gave us when we left Cardiff." Back came the man quite solemn and said, "Sorry, sir; the Purser has destroyed it."

"SORRY, SIR; THE PURSER HAS DESTROYED IT."

After all my "information" had been duly noted, we were allowed to proceed, and the net result was we were berthed in the basin: the Naval Store Officer, an old friend, at once came on board to arrange for our discharge of "5,071 tons of coal." I explained I hadn't got so much as a lump and wanted some bunkers.

The following day I went to report to our temporary C.-in-C. I went in my ordinary "get-up," and I think he was a little taken aback at a naval Commander with a moustache, in plain clothes.

I had been advised not to attempt to " play the fool " with the Admiral, but I explained I had no intention of doing anything except play the part of a collier Master, who had little, if any, respect for distinguished naval officers, and so when the Admiral arrived I remained " standing easy " and just touched one finger towards my cap. He asked me in a somewhat severe voice if I was " Commander Campbell " ; but I gave no answer except to say I was Master of the collier *Loderer*, until he put the direct question, " Are you Commander Campbell as well as Master of s.s. *Loderer* ? " As I already knew, he was keenly interested in the whole job, and did everything within his power not only to make me personally comfortable, but the whole lot of us, and gave us the pleasure of coming on board to see the ship and see how he could help us. He invited me to stay at Admiralty House, which was a most enjoyable change, but the secrecy part of it was somewhat difficult. It was rather unusual for an Admiral to have the skipper of a dirty old tramp to stay with him, and our conversation in the presence of the servants was either strained or non-existent. We soon got dry-docked and had a rapid overhaul—sufficient to take us back to England. It was while we were in dry dock that we were able to see the damage done to our bilge-heel by U.68 : it was not of a serious nature.

There were several other " tramps " in harbour, and on going ashore one day to obtain water from

the Master Attendant—a Lieutenant R.N. who didn't know me from Adam—I was told to wait in the waiting-room. I found there some half-dozen other tramp Captains, and we smoked cheap cigars. As long as the conversation was confined to abuse of the Admiralty, I was able to take part with a light heart, feeling it was in the execution of my duty. I was rather amused at being able to join in a whole-hearted abuse of the inability of the powers that be to run merchant ships, and especially of the disgraceful way the latter were sent to sea with only 6-pounders. When I pointed to my ship without a gun at all, all mine being stowed away and in any case invisible, the limits of stupidity appeared to have been reached, and I came in for much sympathy and advice as to what I should say to the powers.

The conversation now drifted to people in Cardiff, and I began to feel in deep water. As already mentioned, I had never been there, except in imagination, which didn't extend to an acquaintance with Mr. This and That. I had no one this time to get me out of it, and therefore made an excuse and got up to leave. After exchanging greetings I was just leaving the door when someone said, "What is your company again, Skipper?" "The good old M.O.B.C.," I replied, and vanished.

Our stay at Bermuda was no longer than it had to be, as we were anxious to get back to the "zone."

The Gulf of St. Lawrence was now more or less closed for the winter, and another mystery ship was in the West Indies, so we were no longer required on the station, especially as no further submarines had appeared since U.53.

Just as we were leaving, our black cat was reported missing, and although I have always heard that sailors are superstitious, I had no idea how serious a matter it was. The whole docks had to be searched, but luckily after a search "it" was duly recovered and rejoined before sailing. Instead of going straight to England, we were ordered to go to Sydney, Cape Breton, as there was a possibility of us being required to take some cargo home, and on arrival there we got further orders for a place in Newfoundland to load 600 tons of dried fish. We had another example here of over-secrecy. An officer had been sent up from Halifax to bring the order about the fish and to render us any assistance we required. I asked him what arrangements he had made with the agents and who they were; he said he hadn't done anything at all, as he thought it was only part of the joke! As the place we were supposed to go to was reported ice-bound, I decided not to attempt it! We were not sorry, as our holds were full, and I was not keen on an additional cargo in the winter months.

Final approval to return to England had now been received, and we were about to sail when telegrams arrived from the Admiralty and C.-in-C.

not to sail till further orders. This was followed by one about the *Moewe*, the famous German raider, being at sea again and in the Atlantic, and in consequence all shipping likely to be affected was to remain in port.

I happened to have a rough plan of the *Moewe*, which showed her fitted with 6-inch guns : we had only 12-pounders. The odds in gun power, therefore, would be against us : on the other hand, if we met her, we would both be disguised merchant ships—she a raider, we a decoy. And should we get a broadside in first at close range, we would, even if we didn't sink her, so disable her as to render her career a short one, if not a total eclipse before getting back home. It appeared to me one of those cases where, although the highest authority may not be justified in risking a weaker force in the presence of a superior one, no objection could be made to the weaker force taking its own chances, especially in the case of a comparatively unimportant unit, as we were. Anyhow, I decided to sail. Having as usual got the crew together and told them my intentions of sailing with the hopes of intercepting the *Moewe* and explaining what the odds were, I sent the necessary telegrams saying we had sailed, closed down the wireless room for reception, and proceeded.

When darkness arrived, we anchored off the coast and converted ourselves into a neutral ship which happened to be leaving New York at the same time,

and bound for Manchester. Our information of the *Moewe's* movements were vague, and we could only aim at the most hopeful course. We had no luck, but we had much amusement at the thoughts of a mystery ship meeting a mystery ship. The fact that we should probably have got the worst of it never seemed to worry anyone—it was a sporting chance, as if we got the first broadside in we might knock out his 6-inch guns.

We arrived back at Queenstown, after three months' absence, towards the end of December. I thought all hands would be pleased to be home, and was surprised to see my old Chief Petty Officer coming to me with a very serious face, and feared something must be wrong, but was relieved to find that his only anxiety was that I might get into trouble for having left Sydney against orders. I was far more interested, as a matter of sentiment, to see whether the ship we had " represented " arrived at her destination of Manchester all right, and sure enough she arrived the day after us. On arrival in home waters we ceased to be s.s. *Loderer*, and again became H.M.S. Q.5.

It was Christmas Eve the day we arrived, and so were in time to spend a busy but pleasant Christmas Day in harbour. The submarines had been active during our absence, and there were rumours of further intensified submarine warfare. There was no time to be wasted, and as we were in bad need of a " refit " I requested to go to Plymouth for this

purpose and also to give leave. Approval having been readily given, we sailed at once. But not before Admiral Bayly had been on board and presented to the men the Distinguished Service Medals they had been awarded in our previous actions.

CHAPTER X

THE SINKING OF U.83

JANUARY 1917 was spent at Plymouth in refitting, giving leave, and getting ready for the next round. The opportunity was taken of studying all that had happened in the submarine warfare during our absence abroad, and I came to the conclusion that the only way for us to ensure decoying the enemy to the surface was deliberately to get torpedoed and trust to still being in a position to fight with our guns afterwards. On the two previous occasions when torpedoes had been fired at us, we had merely taken our chance, but now I decided we must ensure getting hit. It can easily be seen that if a torpedo missed just ahead, as has been related already, it would have hit the ship provided we had been going a bit faster; so the idea now was that the ship would be manœuvred so as to make the torpedo hit.

I explained my intentions to my crew and called for volunteers to remain, giving any man who wished to leave the ship an opportunity to do so; but they all remained.

It was rather a strange coincidence that, previous

to this, two men of different ratings had been showing signs of nervousness, and, on being questioned, they both stated that their wives were trying to persuade them to get out of it, as they (the wives) had dreamt that something dreadful was going to happen to the ship. In one case I was not too sorry for the excuse to get rid of the man, as, although a good fellow, he was not very skilled at his trade; but the other was an excellent fellow and obviously didn't want to leave. As his wife had only dreamt that the ship was coming to grief, and that he himself would be all right, it was suggested that he should square his wife by saying how lucky he was at being sure he would be all right, as no one else on board could say the same. He sailed.

During our refit it became known that the German intensified submarine warfare was due to start on February 1st. This meant that all ships were liable to be sunk without warning if found approaching the British Isles, so we cut down our refit as much as possible and got away back to Queenstown before the end of the month. We sailed again on the last day of January, and had instructions to return after ten days, as this was considered the suitable length for " mystery ships " to be at sea at a time, owing to their limited capacity for carrying fresh food and to the rather strenuous time the crew had when out. I protested without avail that we should like to remain out till we burnt our coal—twenty-two to twenty-three days. I knew my crew, and having

had them, for the most part, with me a year, I knew also that fresh food, etc., didn't worry them so much as getting a submarine.

We proceeded at once to our old hunting-ground off the south-west of Ireland. This was where most of the traffic passed between America and England ; where, too, the water being deep and the weather atrocious at times, the submarine was fairly free from the menace of mines or the molestation of auxiliary patrol craft. We intended working continually in this area, and some disguise in the appearance of the ship had to be made each night : this was particularly necessary, as the sinkings and attacks became increasingly numerous, showing that the submarines were unusually active, and one could not expect that by this time of the war they didn't know a good deal about mystery ships, and any chance of getting one would not be missed.

We arranged our procedure so that every night we were steaming to the westward, the dark hours being the time when the submarine would probably be busy recharging batteries or getting fresh air. During each day we were steaming east, as if homeward bound from America or Canada with a good fat cargo.

Daily we had reports of some ship being attacked or sunk, sometimes ten or fifteen miles away from us ; sometimes anything up to a hundred. It seemed to be only a mathematical problem of

" odds " as to when our turn to get torpedoed would come. The whole crew were waiting for it with enthusiasm. There is a good deal of difference between being in a ship where you know that if a torpedo is seen approaching, you are going to avoid it, and in being in one where you know you are going to make it hit ; and yet I never saw a crew more anxious for a fray. They realised that if the Germans' intensified submarine warfare was a success, then England would be beaten. We were losing some 600,000 tons of shipping of all nationalities a month, and this of course could not go on for ever. And as there was nothing to stop the submarine coming out, it was up to the auxiliary patrols and the " side-show " parties, such as we were, to spare no effort and to risk everything in an attempt to grapple with the one weapon which could and nearly did bring England to her knees. So it was that, when our ten days were up and we were due to return, I decided to remain out. Three times we were ordered to return, but three times I evaded. I felt we were " in touch with the enemy," and there are few orders which justify one in losing touch. I knew my C.-in-C. would do the same if he had been in my place. We remained out till our chance came after seventeen days. I have often heard people say we were lucky in our chance. There is, however, such a thing as looking for an opportunity, and my crew denied their leave, fresh food, and all the rest of it in order

not to miss the chance if it came—and we should have stayed out till our coal was burnt.

The seventeen days were not without incident, apart from the attacks all around us. One day when approaching the south-west point of Ireland, in the afternoon, we sighted a submarine on the surface on our port bow; he remained in sight a few minutes and then dived. He had been heading towards us, and we expected an attack. At the estimated time for the torpedo to come, I had passed the word through the voice-pipes that a torpedo would arrive in a couple of minutes, but none came; and all we saw was a mine which passed a few yards off the ship. Nothing further was seen of the submarine, but a large number of mines were swept up the following day by the ever-alert minesweepers and trawlers. No ships were actually struck, though there were a number in sight at the time.

On February 4th we sighted a barque that had all sail set, but appeared suspicious. On closing her she appeared to be abandoned, and later, from intercepted signals, we gathered the crew had been picked up by one of H.M. sloops. She was a neutral ship who had been boarded by a submarine, and the Master had been told that if he approached within a hundred miles of the British coast he would be sunk; as, however, he had not enough drinking water to return to America, he had abandoned his ship, although in perfect condition and with a cargo

of maize. It happened that we were sailing under the same neutral colours, and I decided to take her in tow, as I thought she would make a good " decoy," not to mention a chance of salvage money. After dark we closed her, and I put a party on board to furl her square sails, leaving the fore and aft set. It was a slow job doing all this and getting her in tow, as I couldn't afford to deplete my ship too much, in case I got attacked, and so I only put Lieutenant Stuart, R.N.R., and three men aboard to do the job, and they, for the most part, did not know much about sailing ships. We eventually got her in tow about 3 a.m. on the 5th, and I left on board Lieutenant Russell, R.N.R., three men, and a Maxim gun for self-defence. Arrangements were also made as to what to do if we got attacked. On no account were they to use their Maxim gun, except as a last act of self-defence—the entire action would be fought by Q.5. The latter event nearly came off, as the following afternoon a ship which had been in sight nearly all day and was about 8–10 miles ahead suddenly blew up in a large explosion. She was an ammunition ship, and had been torpedoed. The flames and smoke went to a great height. The alarm was sounded, and we awaited an attack on ourselves ; but, much to our disgust, the periscope of a submarine was seen close on our starboard side, though no attack was made. It turned out afterwards that the submarine had herself been damaged by the force

of the explosion and was obliged to return back home.

When we got to the place where the ship had sunk, there was nothing to be seen except one small piece of wood and a lifebelt.

Even this sight didn't deter my crew from the intention of risking a similar fate, though the strain was fairly severe, especially for the men in the engine- and boiler-rooms, as they have the least chance of coming out free from a hit by torpedo or mine, and also see least or nothing of the " fun." But the engineering staff can always be relied on to turn up trumps : they are the men who take a ship into action, see it through, and bring her out ; without them we should be done.

After this slight flutter of excitement we continued our tow without incident, till we got to Berehaven about 2 a.m. on the 6th. Here we were met by a most important M.L., who, having received a fictitious name from me, ordered us to follow him into harbour. I would gladly have done so, but he went over shallow water through which I couldn't possibly follow him, especially with a ship in tow. Very irate he returned, and in his best language, at which he was evidently a pastmaster, he ordered me to obey his orders forthwith and follow him. Again I was obliged to decline his lead, and when he returned a second time I suggested he might give me the secret signal for the night to pass through the defence. He told me to mind

my own business! Pity I didn't understand English! etc., etc. Eventually we got past the defences, and I hoped all was peace, but back he came to tell me to anchor in a certain position. I replied that I was going farther up, as I wanted to see the Senior Naval Officer urgently. He then wanted to know who the something something I thought I was. I told him Commander Gordon Campbell. No sooner had we anchored than he came alongside full of apologies, and over a cup of cocoa we both agreed we had carried out our duties entirely to our satisfaction. It was Keble Chatterton.

Having turned our "tow" over to the Senior Naval Officer, we got away again before daylight and returned to our old haunt. Our ten days were now nearly up, but, as I have related, we went on. It is difficult to explain the feelings we had and the anxiety we felt to get at the job when ships with valuable cargoes were being sunk almost under our very noses. Surely our chance must come, and sure enough on February 17th it arrived.

On the previous night we had heard two submarines talking to each other. It was nothing very unusual, but, for some reason undefinable, we were particularly interested.

At 9.45 a.m. on the 17th we were on our easterly course "homeward bound" in about longitude $11\frac{1}{2}°$ west, latitude $51\frac{1}{2}°$ north. The sea was calm, it was a nice fine day, and everything looked peaceful. Suddenly a torpedo was seen approach-

ing from our starboard side : it was fired at a great range and we would have had time to avoid it, but (as had been prearranged) we wanted to make sure it hit. Nothing, therefore, was done till it was close to the ship and coming straight for the engine-room. At the last moment, when it would be too late for the enemy to see our movement, I put the helm over to avoid unnecessary loss of life and brought the torpedo just abaft the engine-room, which undoubtedly saved the lives of those below, but caught us on the bulkhead and flooded, in consequence, two-thirds of the ship.

Whilst the torpedo was approaching, I sang out to the Navigator, who was in the chart-house working out his morning observations, " Look out, we are going to get it all right." He only bobbed his head outside and said, " Aye, aye, sir ; just time to finish this sight," and back he went, quite disinterested except to complete his job, which was to have our position always accurate in case we wanted it.

The torpedo exploded with a great crash and knocked several of us down, including myself. Smith, who was on watch in the engine-room and nearest to the explosion, had the worst shaking, but he quickly recovered himself and went to his panic-party station in charge of a boat. After getting up, I observed a thing which I hadn't foreseen and I couldn't help laughing at. It will be remembered that we had drilled for nearly every emergency, and how I would say " Torpedo

were happening on board. The ship had only two bulkheads and the torpedo had burst the after one, so that she was free to the water from the fore side of the boiler-room right to the stern, and she rapidly began to settle by the stern—so rapidly that our black cat, which had either been blown off the forecastle by the explosion or had jumped over in fright, swam down the ship's side and inboard over the stern.

The Chief Engineer reported that the engine-

"DON'T TALK SO LOUD; HE'LL HEAR YOU."

room was flooded, and I ordered him and his men to hide, which they did by crawling on the top gratings: the ship being abandoned, they couldn't come out on deck—again an unrehearsed incident, but Loveless and all of them knew the game we were out to play.

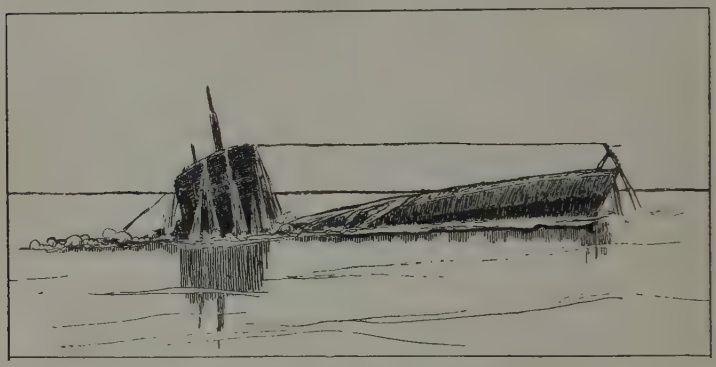
As soon as the boats were away, the submarine went close to them only a few yards off; she was obviously going to leave nothing to chance, and it was as well that the crew were carefully dressed to their part with no service flannels. One of the crew in the boats was heard telling another, as the periscope was looking at them, "Don't talk so loud; he'll hear you!"

The submarine now came and inspected the ship at very close range, some 10 or 15 yards—so close that from my look-out at the starboard end of the bridge I could see the whole of his hull under water. The temptation to open fire on the periscope was very great, though obviously not the thing to do, as it would have done no harm. But it looked at the time as if, after getting deliberately torpedoed, we were going to have nothing to show for it since he appeared to be moving off.

The Chief had reported the ship sinking by the stern ; still, there was nothing for it but to wait and watch the submarine move slowly past the ship and away ahead. All this time the men on board were lying hidden, feeling the ship getting deeper by the stern—in fact, the men at the after-gun were practically awash—but they all stuck it and never moved a muscle. Each one had a responsibility. Had one man got in a real panic and showed himself, the game would have been up ; the scrutiny of the submarine was indeed a severe one. The wireless operator, locked up in his cabin by himself, had to sit still and do nothing ; he must have been aching to send out an S.O.S. and have his picture in the illustrated papers next day as " the man who sent out the S.O.S.," but he knew we wanted no one to interfere with our cold-blooded encounter with the enemy.

After the submarine had passed up the starboard side, he crossed our bow and went over towards

port; the signalman and I, therefore, did our "belly crawl" and swopped places. At 10.5 a.m. the enemy broke surface about 300 yards on our port bow, but not in the bearing of any of the guns. Anyhow, things were looking more hopeful, and I was able to tell the men that all was going well. The boats had by this time got to our port quarter, and towards them the submarine now proceeded. We heard afterwards that their intention had been



SUBMARINE BREAKING SURFACE.

to take the "Master" prisoner and also get some provisions. It was only a matter of waiting now, as the submarine was right up with conning tower open. It was obvious that she would pass very close to the ship, and we might just as well have all guns bearing, so as to make sure of it. As she came abreast of the ship the Captain was seen coming out of the conning tower. At this moment I gave the order to open fire—at 10.10—twenty-five minutes after we had been torpedoed. The White Ensign

fluttered at the masthead, and three 12-pounders, a 6-pounder, the Maxim guns and rifles all opened fire together. What a shock it must have been for the Captain suddenly to see our wheel-house collapse, our sides to fall down, and the hen-coop to splutter forth Maxim shots! But he had not long to think, as the first shot, which was from the 6-pounder, hit him, and I believe the first intimation the submarine crew had that anything was wrong was seeing their Captain drop through the conning tower.

The range was only about 100 yards, so the submarine never had a chance of escape. It seemed almost brutal to fire at such close range, but we had taken a sporting chance ourselves in decoying him to such an ideal position that one really had no other thought than destruction.

The submarine never seemed to recover from her surprise as she lay on the surface upon our beam, whilst we pumped lead and steel into her. Forty-five shells were fired in all, practically every one being a hit, so that she finally sank with the conning tower shattered and open, the crew pouring out as hard as they could. About eight men were seen in the water, which was bitterly cold and thick with oil. I ordered the boats to their assistance, and they were just in time to rescue one officer and one man—as the panic party called them, a "sample of each." Thus ended U.83. That night we heard his pal calling him up on the wireless and receiving no reply.

I received the prisoners on the bridge, having slipped on a decent uniform monkey-jacket and cap, which I always kept handy for the purpose. As the service expression goes, they had "no complaints," and I regret that after being transferred to a destroyer, one of the prisoners died before he could be landed and was buried at sea.

Our main object of destroying the enemy having been achieved, the next important consideration was the ship itself. As soon as the submarine had come to the surface, I had sent out a wireless to our C.-in-C. informing him that we had been torpedoed, and now further signals were sent for assistance.

The panic party came back to the ship, whilst a rapid survey was being made. The engine-room and boiler-room were both full of water; and Nos. 3 and 4 holds, the two after ones, were rapidly filling. I didn't appreciate at that time what stability the cargo of wood would give us, and it appeared that in a very short time the ship would sink by the stern, as she was surely and slowly settling down. I therefore mustered my crew and called for twelve volunteers to stand by the ship, the remainder to get out of harm's way in the boats. Everyone volunteered to stay, so I selected twelve. It never struck me at the time that with myself the number was now thirteen; anyhow, the sequel will show that thirteen is after all a lucky number.

By eleven o'clock there were still no signs of any rescue ships, though I knew without being told

H.M.S. " Q.5 " AFTER BEING TORPEDOED AND SINKING THE SUBMARINE. THE WATER CAN BE SEEN BREAKING OVER THE SHIP'S STERN AND GUNHOUSE.

that our C.-in-C. would send everything available. The ship was settling still more, and I gave orders for all confidential matter to be destroyed, as we could not afford to run the risk that any of it might float about if the ship sank and be picked up by the enemy. This specially referred to secret charts we had on board, which had to be burnt. The steel chest with our codes, etc., was therefore ditched; but before doing so, we sent in code a farewell message to our Commander-in-Chief: "Q.5 slowly sinking respectfully wishes you good-bye."

H.M.S. *Narwhal*, a destroyer, arriving about noon, I sent the major part of my crew on board her and myself went over to see what could be done in the way of towing. H.M.S. *Buttercup* arrived shortly afterwards, and I arranged for her to take us in tow. With the twelve men I had, we got the ship in tow, thanks chiefly to the good seamanship of the *Buttercup*.

Q.5 herself had now ceased to get any deeper in the water, and had assumed a more or less definite position; presumably because as much water as possible had got into the ship and she was only now gradually getting water-logged.

No sooner were we in tow than the cable parted, owing to our helm being jammed hard over and immovable. Luckily, our donkey-boiler, or auxiliary boiler, was high up in the ship, and we were able to raise steam in this, which gave power to steer and assistance in working the cable, and we eventually got in tow about 5 p.m., the raising of

steam and the necessary connections to the steering gear taking some time. The ship towed fairly well, but of course the movement ahead increased the strain, and with the swell breaking on board the stern gradually got deeper—in fact, the after-gun-house was sometimes under water.

H.M.S. *Laburnum* had in the meantime arrived and acted as escort, whilst the *Narwhal* returned to harbour with my main crew and the prisoners .At about 2 o'clock on the following morning the ship suddenly started to heel over, and the water gained to such an extent as to put the donkey-boiler out, which once more deprived us of our rudder; luckily we were able to heave it amidships before the last " drop of steam " vanished.

The Chief and I made a tour of the ship to try to find the cause of this inrush of water. It was pitch dark, and we had only candles which kept on going out, but we were able to grovel into the bunkers. We found that the coal had been washed out of the starboard bunkers and replaced by water, which was gradually rising. Whilst we were down below, the ship gave another lurch and we thought we would be trapped; and to add to the uncanniness of the situation, our candle having gone out, we heard the cat somewhere near us meowing, and, despite the somewhat critical situation, we spent quite a time groping about trying to find it, but without success. The humour of the situation did not strike me then, but has often done so since.

Here was a ship in a sinking condition and two of her senior officers groping about in the dark in bunker spaces trying to find a cat. I think it must have been recollections of the unhappiness caused by its disappearance at Bermuda which made us do it and its success in getting back to the ship after being torpedoed.

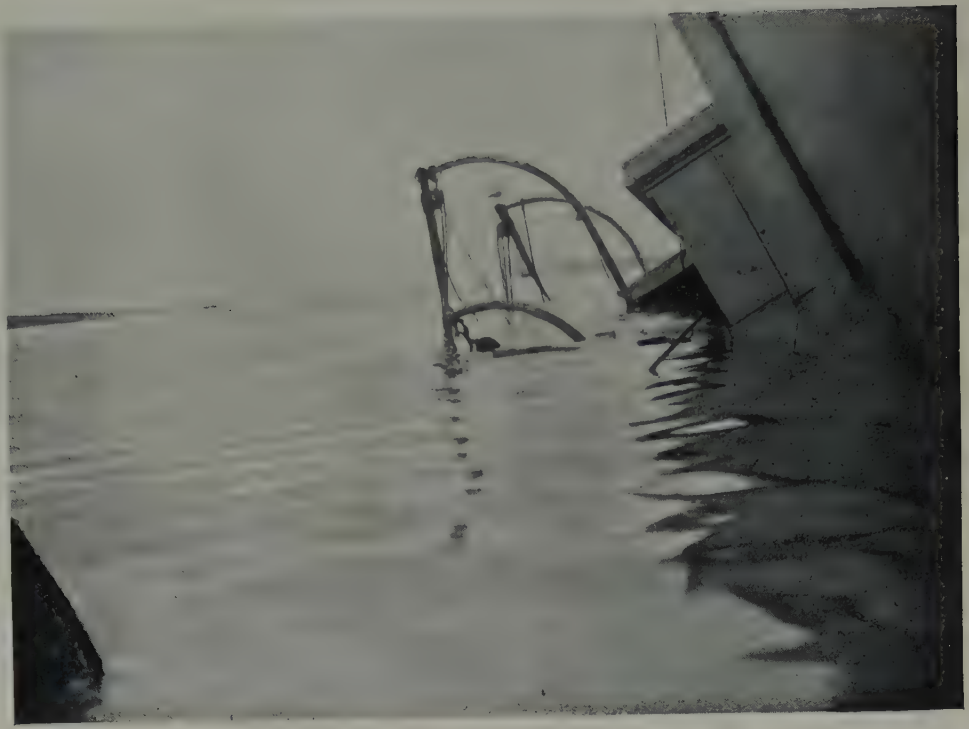
At 3.30 a.m. I ordered my remaining crew into the boat, which we had kept alongside, and told the *Laburnum* we were coming over. I was doing a last "walk round" to see that everyone was out of it, when one of the depth charges exploded on its own account, just as I was approaching the after-part. It was right in the stern, which at that time was under water, and what caused it to go off will, of course, never be known. Anyhow, I didn't waste much time thinking about it, as at the moment I was the only person on board, and knowing that a magazine was just below it, it didn't take me many seconds to get with the others in the boat. I said I was alone, but I found afterwards I wasn't, as Stuart hadn't obeyed the order to get into the boat, for he thought it part of his job to see I was "all right." Like the rest of them, he used to spoil me looking after my comfort and welfare.

Having got into the motor-boat we shoved off, but, of course, it wouldn't run, so we drifted about till we were picked up by the *Laburnum*. None of us, of course, had any lights showing. The *Buttercup*, having heard the explosion of the depth charge,

thought the ship had been torpedoed again, and without more ado or looking for survivors quietly slipped the tow and returned to harbour, reporting that we had been torpedoed again and probably all lost.

It is true that the depth charge had done further damage, but when daylight came the ship was still afloat, more or less a derelict. A party of six of us went over, and the *Laburnum* got us in tow again. Having got the ship in tow, we returned to the *Laburnum*, as there was nothing of use to be done on board and it was unnecessarily risking life to remain there. During the day I received orders to sink the old ship, for the C.-in-C. thought she would become a water-logged derelict and a danger to others. Since she was still safely in tow, and there was a reasonable chance of beaching her, I reported accordingly and towing continued. Towards the evening we were approaching Berehaven and I went over again with a few men. The ship at this time was heeling over 20°, and the stern was eight feet under water. As we got towards the harbour a mine was sighted on the surface, and I remarked that it would be bad luck to be " done in " by a mine now. My old pensioner, Truscott, who was always at hand, especially if there was any seamanship required, said, " Don't you worry, sir ; not fifty mines could sink us now." It was just typical of the spirit of the men.

As we got to the entrance, the King's Harbour Master, Commander Sharpe, came on board and



H.M.S. "Q.5" AFTER BEING BEACHED, SHOWING THE APPEARANCE FROM THE BRIDGE AT HIGH WATER.

told us the best place to beach her ; the *Laburnum* slipped the tow, the trawler *Luneda* and the tug *Flying Sportsman* came alongside, and, aided by them, we pushed the old *Loderer*, alias *Farnborough*, alias Q.5, on the beach at 9.30 p.m.

As I reported at the time, I think our safe arrival in harbour was chiefly due to the good seamanship displayed by Lieutenant-Commander Hallwright in the *Laburnum*, for it was no easy job getting the ship in tow with such conditions. It was done chiefly by the very skilful handling of his ship, but also in a very short space of time the few men I had on board had done their full share, and I smiled to think that had we been a full-fledged man-of-war we should have had some fifty men on the forecastle instead of five.

We had already received a wireless from our C.-in-C. after the action, saying, " Splendidly done ; your magnificent perseverance and ability are well rewarded," and now we got another message : " Very good piece of work. Well done." Such messages mean a lot at any time. When the men were tired after a trying time, and, being as we were under a man who is not given to wasting words, they were all the more appreciated.

After the ship had been beached we had a " night in "—such as it was, because we found that though at low tide the ship was fairly dry of water and we could raise steam in our donkey-boiler again, yet at high tide the ship was under water up to the bridge and we had about 40° list. All our provisions

and luxuries had, of course, gone, and living on board ship with a 40° list is no pleasant job, but I suppose we were imbued with the Army tradition of " saving the guns," and we decided to try to salve the lot. Admiral Bayly had kindly sent his flagship, under Captain Hyde (now Rear-Admiral Hyde, R.A.N.), to give us assistance and comfort, but being pig-headed we refused the comfort, though were glad of the assistance, especially of his Warrant Officers, such as the gunner and shipwright—possibly a foolish decision on my part, because it was unnecessarily hard going for the thirteen of us on board, although it had its sense of humour. As the tide fell, the Chief would raise steam in the donkey-boiler and we would get steam on the windlass and derricks; then as the tide rose, he would damp his fires, and, instead of our being able to work on salvage, we were by the increasing list of the ship unable to do anything except await the turn of tide, or in the meantime start the gramophone and enjoy life on a deck sloping at 40°. Whilst we were doing all this, much to our surprise Admiral Bayly made a special visit to Berehaven in H.M.S. *Penelope* to see the ship, and he had us all aboard his temporary flagship to say a few words, which we all much appreciated.

After a week's hard work, all the guns were salved and everything else that could be, and we left the old ship on the beach. She was eventually salved, and not only sailed again during the war as an ordinary

"Q.5" AFTER BEING BEACHED, BROADSIDE VIEW.

"Q.5" AFTER BEING BEACHED, BOW VIEW.

tramp steamer, but was still running till May 1928, under various names and owners, her last name being *Hollypark*.

Since the war she has frequently been to a great friendly nation's ports, and I have seen from time to time notices of her career in various papers; the last I saw credited her with twenty-two submarines, the correct number being the two without the twenty. The old ship has now been sold to the ship breakers; and I have not only been able to obtain and present the ship's binnacle to my old school Dulwich College, but have myself received a gift of the ship's bell, both due to the kindness of Old Alleynians. After the war the Admiralty presented the ship with a tablet recalling her war services, the presentation being made in the presence of the then First Sea Lord (Admiral of the Fleet Lord Wester Wemyss) by Admiral Sir A. L. Duff, G.C.B., etc.

After leaving the old ship, I proceeded to Queenstown to report, and then with the remnants of my crew to the Barracks at Devonport. I found it extremely difficult to word my official report without overstating the case; but having seen the whole action, I was filled with the greatest pride in the conduct of all my crew. It is seldom one can say that anything is 100 per cent., yet the success was not due to any one individual, but to each one individually; and the strain on those remaining concealed after the old ship had been torpedoed,

and might for all we knew sink at any minute, can very easily be imagined. I reported that I thought they might almost be said to have passed through the supreme test of discipline, and on looking back I don't think I overstated the case.

On arrival at Plymouth I was ordered to read to the whole crew a telegram from the Admiralty conveying their "keen appreciation of the skill, nerve, and gallantry they recently displayed" and awarding the ship £1,000 as before.

I had the honour of being received by H.M. the King a few days later, when he informed me that he had awarded me the Victoria Cross; my First Lieutenant and Chief the Distinguished Service Order; as well as decorations to other officers and men. In fact, His Majesty wished every man who had remained on board after the ship was torpedoed to receive some recognition. I was glad to have the opportunity to say that the success was not due to me more than anyone else. The result was due to each officer and man; had one failed or done the wrong thing, the action would have been a failure.

Unfortunately—for me—the award of the Victoria Cross appeared in the *Court Circular* without having been announced in the *Gazette*; and this unusual procedure was picked up by the Press, so that I have been saddled ever since with the title of "Mystery V.C."

There was no mystery really, yet it was obviously difficult to allow it to leak out that it had any con-

"Q.5" AFTER BEING BEACHED. STERN VIEW, SHOWING GUNS BEING SALVED.

nection with " mystery " ships, as it might have not only endangered our lives unnecessarily, but, what was of far more importance, reduced the chance of doing the same again.

The notice in the *Gazette* appeared shortly afterwards, and gave nothing away. It stated the V.C. had been awarded for " conspicuous gallantry, consummate coolness, and skill in command of one of H.M. ships in action."

List of Awards after sinking U.83

Victoria Cross

Commander Gordon Campbell, D.S.O., R.N.

Distinguished Service Order

Lieutenant Ronald Neil Stuart, R.N.R.
Engineer-Lieutenant Leonard S. Loveless, D.S.C., R.N.R.

Distinguished Service Cross

Acting-Lieutenant Francis R. Hereford, R.N.R.
Sub-Lieutenant Richard P. Nisbet, R.N.R.
Assistant Paymaster Reginald A. Nunn, R.N.R.

Distinguished Service Medal

Petty Officer Francis J. Horwill.
Stoker Petty Officer Samuel J. Pollard.
Leading Seaman Herbert L. Day, R.F.R.
Seaman Benjamin Samms, R.N.R.
Seaman Alex. S. Morrison, R.N.R.
Leading Stoker Richard E. Davidson, R.N.R.
Stoker Aaron Hopkins, R.N.R.

Wireless Telegraph Operator Thomas E. Fletcher, R.N.R.
Seaman William Williams, R.N.R.

Bar to Distinguished Service Medal

Chief Petty Officer George Henry Truscott.

Mentioned in Despatches

Acting-Lieutenant Frederick George Russell, R.N.R.
Wireless Telegraphist Allan Andrews, R.N.R.
Petty Officer Ernest Pitcher.
Shipwright William S. Smart.
A.B. Charles E. Hodder.
A.B. Richard W. Sheppard.
Seaman Alphonso Davies, R.N.R.
A.B. Ernest A. Veale, R.F.R.
Seaman Patrick Murphy, R.N.R.
Seaman Robert Jenkins, R.N.R.
Seaman John S. Martindale, R.N.R.
Seaman Martin Connors, R.N.R.
A.B. Bruce R. C. Harris.
Seaman Robert Dryden, R.N.R.
A.B. Noble Britton.
Seaman John G. Orr, R.N.R.
Signalman Charles W. Hurrell, R.N.V.R.
Seaman Frederick Dodd, R.N.R.
Seaman William H. Bennison, R.N.R.
E.R.A. Albert W. Morrison, R.N.R.
Leading Stoker Thomas Davies, R.N.R.
Stoker William O'Leary, R.N.R.
Stoker George Rees, R.N.R.
Armourers' Crew Stanley Woodison.

CHAPTER XI

H.M.S. "PARGUST," MARCH TO MAY 1917

After returning to Devonport the ship had to be paid off. This would appear a strange procedure, observing that everyone was already out of her and the ship herself a wreck. But for pay purposes and accounting of stores an official date had to be fixed for closing accounts, etc. As far as stores were concerned, we lost nearly everything, which was the simplest way to "close accounts" from my point of view, the work being chiefly done by the Naval Store Department.

The first batch of my crew was already at the Royal Naval Barracks, and the ones who had remained at Berehaven with me now joined them. The C.-in-C. had asked that they might be kept together ready for another ship, as he considered them the best on the station. This was approved, and, although living at the Barracks, they were still my crew and I could get them for anything I wanted.

Having paid off, I was appointed temporarily to the fairly new Anti-Submarine Department of the Admiralty and employed on going round inspecting

mystery ships that were fitting out. I always took my First Lieutenant and Chief Engineer with me for this duty, as their expert knowledge of merchant ships was invaluable. For instance, I would tell Stuart where I wanted to place a gun and how I proposed to conceal it, and he would be able to tell me whether my proposal would make the ship look suspicious or not. The Chief, too, would know exactly what to look for, and things that would pass as serviceable in a merchant ship would not necessarily do so for a " man-of-war " inspection.

Luckily for me, my face didn't fit very well in this department, and I was able to get back to sea again. I was nominated for three different ships, each of which was entirely unsuited for the job or for the area in which it was to be employed. For instance, one ship was a railway steamer with a slanting funnel and fitted with baggage ports. What chance of disguising her ? And she carried one and a half days' coal, enough to take her, in fine weather, from Queenstown into the Atlantic Ocean for an hour or so, but not to get her back again !

Another one was a beautiful ship, which would carry some 8,000 tons of cargo and had a speed of 12 knots. It was not for me to say whether the policy was correct in taking up a brand-new ship like this for decoy purposes, but what I did object to was the fact that the ship had what is called a cruiser stern, a thing not very common at that

time, and, of course, there would have been no way to disguise it.

Eventually I was given permission to find my own ship, and proceeded forthwith to Cardiff with Stuart and the Chief. We knew exactly what we wanted, namely, an ordinary tramp steamer, and one that could be easily disguised in small ways. Speed was of no great importance, but we wanted one with a donkey-boiler high up, our experience in Q.5 having shown the advantage of this.

A couple of hours in the docks and I was on the telephone to London asking if s.s. *Vittoria* could be taken up. We returned to London, and, thanks to Mr. Walker of the Ministry of Shipping, the ship was taken up and her loading at Cardiff suspended in about twenty-four hours.

The ship was much the same as our last one, an ordinary tramp steamer, this time with two well decks and a "poop." She was of about 3,000 tons and a speed of 8 knots. She wasn't so old as the *Loderer*, and although not quite so long had a more solid appearance in every way. She was taken round to Devonport to fit out, whilst I was seeing what I could get in the way of guns to fit her out with. She became H.M.S. *Vittoria* on March 28th, 1917. Guns were, as usual, scarce, but I was given a 4-inch gun and four 12-pounder guns, in addition to Lewis guns. This seems and was a great improvement on our last armament, but I was not satisfied. Merchant ships had changed

somewhat since we fitted out the *Loderer*. At that time it was comparatively rare to see an ordinary tramp steamer with a defensive gun mounted aft, but now every merchant ship was being fitted with a defensive gun, as fast as guns became available. I therefore wanted a gun which would be visible, mounted aft as a defensive gun. I felt sure that I would appear " suspicious " without one, and I would have been satisfied with a 3-pounder or anything that would fire and make a noise, but it was turned down and other arrangements had to be made.

In fitting out the *Vittoria* we, of course, had the great advantage not only of our previous experience, but also of a new " invention " which had taken place in the mounting of small guns. A mounting of a 12-pounder had now been made which was a " tilting mounting " and enabled the gun to fall right over on its side, so there was less vertical height to be concealed. One push of the gun, and it was up and in position ready for firing.

This innovation enabled us to arrange the armament so as to have a very fine broadside of one 4-inch gun and three 12-pounder guns, as two of the 12-pounders were able to be mounted on the centre line.

The 4-inch gun was mounted aft on the poop. It was fitted in a hatch, like an ordinary cargo hatch, the sides of which fell down. This hatch did not conceal the whole gun, which was higher than the

coaming; we, therefore, had the top part covered alternatively with a dummy boat, upside-down, such as may be seen stowed away in a ship when at sea, or when we got tired of that it was covered with a "crate," as if part of our upper-deck cargo. Another alternative was a spar across with a few bits of washed clothes hanging on it. The gun was painted dull, and, as only a comparatively small part showed above the "hatch," it did not take a great deal to make it invisible from outboard.

One disadvantage of having this gun on the poop was the question of getting good depression. If we put the gun too high up, it would have been very awkward to conceal it; whilst if we put it as low down as possible, then we had to sacrifice some depression, which meant that we could not fire at a submarine which was close under the stern or quarter. This latter I accepted, as except for this the gun had a splendid arc of fire.

Two 12-pounders were placed one each side in "houses" which were built on to the existing cabins. Thanks once more to the dockyard, the houses were made so realistic from outside that it was literally impossible to tell they weren't real cabins. A new and very effective arrangement was made to drop the upper part of the "cabin" when required to bring the gun into action. There were no hinges and the upper part was kept up by a weight, which could be released by knocking off a slip and the whole of the top half of the cabin

fell down through " guides " flush with the lower half. The cabins were fitted with port-holes, a dummy door, and a handrail, just at the place where the " crack " would have shown between the upper and lower parts. The other two 12-pounders, which were tilting ones, were placed amidships in the fore and aft line of the ship, to enable them to fire either side as desired. One was placed on the forecastle, at the after-end of it. The concealment of this gave us a lot of thought. There was already a windlass on the forecastle and a second would have looked suspicious ; a reel used for running wires on to would not be long enough to cover the gun ; and eventually we covered it with a piece of canvas which had a grass line or rope attached to it, so that from an outside appearance it looked like a big hawser.

The other 12-pounder, which tilted, we put in the place the hen-coop had been in the *Loderer*, in the middle of the ship on the boat-deck. There was little difficulty in concealing this one, as the ordinary canvas on the rails at the after-end of the boat-deck hid it from that point of view and the ordinary lumber, such as lockers for " scrubbers," lifebelt racks, casks, etc., concealed it on either side.

In fitting out this ship there was more officialdom than on the previous occasion, as the mystery ship had become more of an established policy. I was therefore obliged to have the guns fitted with safety stops, so that we couldn't fire on what theoretically

was a dangerous bearing to ourselves. It was rather waste of money, as I removed them all before going to sea, the risk of firing into ourselves being small compared with others we intended to take, and I didn't want to run the risk of not being able to fire at a submarine because of the full arc of the guns being cramped by safety stops. One never knew what angle one might assume after being torpedoed.

The next consideration was our "visible" gun. I felt convinced it was necessary, and, my appeals for it being in vain, I got the Dockyard to make me a very realistic dummy 12-pounder. It was made of wood, with a brass handle to turn it round by. It was mounted right aft and stuck well up, just the same as other ships had. It, of course, masked the fire of the 4-inch gun dead astern; but this had to be accepted, as incidentally it helped in its concealment and reduced the chances of us being suspected. It could be trained round or elevated, in fact could do everything except fire. We were tickled very much with our dummy gun; it was really a beautiful model, and I had hoped to keep it as a curio for the garden one day, but alas! although I took it to our next ship, it finally went to the bottom. The ensign staff, of course, had to be fitted clear of the dummy gun and a Red Ensign kept handy, as if we "opened fire" with our "dummy," it would have to be under the Red Ensign.

In addition to our guns we had two 14-inch torpedoes in this ship ; they were a mixed blessing, as although occasions might arise when they would be useful, they wanted a lot of looking after and meant additional men and a further crowding of the accommodation. Furthermore, they were an old pattern, and this, together with the fact that they would be fairly high above the sea-level, would not add to their reliability. Anyhow, we had them, and the torpedo tubes were fitted on the mess-deck ; the doors in the ship's side were cut and hinged with invisible hinges inside. These doors could only be opened and the torpedoes fired from the bridge, this being the place where the " sights " could best be worked from. I had to get some of the men specially trained for looking after the torpedoes, as I didn't want to get a single man additional that wasn't necessary.

It will be remembered that in the *Loderer* the depth charges had to be run along on trolleys, but in this ship we had a poop, and so they were fitted in the stern, two on each quarter, and ports were cut in the stern and fitted with internal hinges like the torpedo ports, and when required the ports could be dropped and the depth charge pushed out.

Our armament was now complete, but various other general improvements had been thought of. Extra bulkheads were built : these we weren't very keen about, as it added to the time of fitting out, being a big job ; but the Admiralty had decided

they were essential and, of course, they added to our stability. The ship was now divided into five watertight compartments instead of three.

We had an electric bell fitted over the stern which could be rung from the bridge : this idea arose from our action in Q.5, as it struck me that the occasion might arise when the ship would be " abandoned," the boats away, and the submarine remaining submerged. In this event the idea was that, after waiting an hour, the bell would be rung, which would recall the boats to the ship and the crew would start to come on board again, and we thought that this would probably entice the submarine to come up. This had happened in the case of one or two real merchant ships. It was never actually used by us except in drill. I also got a couple of trench periscopes, which enabled me to keep a better look around from my concealed position at the end of the bridge.

The getting of these trench periscopes caused more difficulty than anything else. As I have already said, all our transactions had to be done more officially than previously, and, trench periscopes being an Army store, long explanations were necessary as to why a naval officer wanted them. But Mr. Oliver, who was never defeated, eventually got them for me. The arrangements of the messes were much the same as before, but additional trap hatches had to be built to get up to the 4-inch gun and the gun on the forecastle. The crews of the

4-inch gun and dummy one had a special mess built for them inside the poop, and so were always on the spot.

When Q.5 had paid off, the crew had been kept together, as already stated, and were now available for *Vittoria*, and so I was able to take practically the whole of my crew with me ; a few fell out owing to loss of nerve after the previous action, and I also had to take some additional men to man my increased armament. They were all volunteers, but the backbone was there, and it didn't take many days to get the new ratings up to the standard and spirit I required, which was no mean one. Amongst my crew were two hardy seamen from Newfoundland and a Lieutenant R.N.R.—Frame—a New Zealander who had come over with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and won his Military Medal in Gallipoli. I already had a wireman on board from Canada, and I felt we were becoming thoroughly representative of the British Empire.

I had one very excellent man on board, who by nature was very " jumpy "—the sort of man who jumped if you dropped a hammer near him. I thought that after being torpedoed once he would have had enough of it, especially as a bit of wood that was blown in the air had landed on his head on that occasion and stunned him. I therefore suggested he might prefer a quieter job, but he insisted on coming on again—in fact, he came on to the bitter end. I was very delighted, as not only was he an

excellent hand, but also I thought how extraordinarily plucky he was, as although he was never anything but perfect at his job, yet he lived in a continuous state of being scared.

The training and drill were on the same lines as before and there was little we could think of to better our programme. The principal new "stunt" we thought of, in addition to the electric "recall bell" referred to, was what we termed "'Q' abandon ship." It had occurred to us that a case might arise when, after we had been torpedoed and the panic party had done their part, the identity of our disguise might be disclosed, possibly through the torpedo having caused the guns to be unmasked or through some other mishap. In the event of this happening, the idea was to have a second, or as we called it "'Q' abandon ship." For this purpose we were to pretend that the game was up, and, leaving the White Ensign up and our guns disclosed, the remainder of the men who had been left on board were to abandon ship! The boats were to be called back to collect more men, any spare boats were to be lowered, and we carried a Carley float (or raft) which was to be launched specially for this purpose, being things normally only carried by men-of-war. This we hoped would convince the enemy that we were really all out of it—in fact, two guns' crews only were to remain on board, together with the necessary people on the bridge and a couple of men at the tubes.

The question of the dummy gun had to be arranged for. Having the gun, it had to be manned; on the other hand, it couldn't fire. I therefore had to arrange for something that didn't quite appear to be in accordance with naval traditions. Two men were told off as the crew of the dummy gun and wore bluejackets' uniform—for "action." They manned the gun and very gallantly pointed it at the enemy, then disgraced themselves by abandoning the gun without firing a shot: and rushing away from it, were able, with the aid of the alley-ways and trap hatches, to take a more creditable part in the rest of the action!

MANNING THE DUMMY GUN.

The manning of the gun at the other end of the ship—on the forecastle—was also a difficulty, as there was nowhere for the men to hide. Whereas the men at the midship gun had the screen to hide behind, it would have been unnatural for the rails on the forecastle to be fitted with screens. They therefore had in the first place to assemble under the forecastle and then climb through a hatch on

to it and lie prone on the deck face downwards, their arms covering their faces and, in fact, become part of the deck. For this purpose they were specially dressed in suitably coloured overall suits. This gun's crew had a particularly arduous task, as they had to lie quite rigid, and to be especially careful not to show their faces, for after personally

"STILL AS THE DECK ITSELF" (see p. 19).

taking each man of the crew away in a boat to lie off the ship, like a submarine might, and see for themselves, I convinced them that any movement, especially one showing the white of the face, could be spotted in a second. I placed Lieutenant Nisbet, who had been with me all along, in charge of this gun.

By a curious coincidence we had trouble again about the secrecy of our name. The "Q" title

had by this time been dropped, and we just had a name. On the ship being taken up, her name had been changed from *Vittoria* to *Snail*. This latter name became compromised whilst we were fitting out, and we eventually sailed under the name of *Pargust*. Who thought of the name or what it means I have never discovered.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, the name has never before been borne by any man-of-war, British, colonial, or foreign. It means nothing, as it does not appear in the Dictionary. Nor does it appear to be a river or place. To find out what its origin is or what it means, we shall have to wait till the person with the super-brain who thought of it appears before the Invention Board.

The fitting-out of the ship took the best part of two months, although the Dockyard was untiring in its efforts to get us finished as fast as possible. The bulkheads were the great delay, as until they were finished the timber which again formed our cargo could not be loaded. Sufficient timber was not available in England, and we had to top some of the holds with casks, secured so that they wouldn't float away. The cargo of timber had one disadvantage, as even after adding ballast it didn't give us a deep enough draught of water, and I feared we might not appear to be carrying sufficient cargo to be attractive. We fretted a good deal at the delay, as the submarines were busy outside.

THE MASTER AND OFFICERS OF "PARGUST." LEFT TO RIGHT: GRANT, LOVELESS, CAMPBELL, BONNER, BYRD.
BACK ROW: ANDREWS, STUART, HEREFORD, NUNN, NISBET.

But in the meantime we did as much drill as possible. On the first day of drill the crew of the after-gun were by no means up to their usual standard, and the Petty Officer drilling them got very exasperated, calling them all the names he could think of. When the time came to pack up, they were still not up to the mark, and his parting shot was to tell them they were all blinkin' well *non compos mentis*—at which they all laughed, including Mr. Mate. The Petty Officer, feeling he might have made a fool of himself, went to the Wireless Operator and inquired what the expression meant. "Why, it means anyone out of his mind —balmy," was the reply. "Ah," laughed the Petty Officer, "the ignorant swabs! I was right: they were balmy."

We got away towards the end of May, and after a few days of drill and gun practice, which was becoming more difficult to arrange owing to the submarines being everywhere, we sailed for Queenstown.

The United States was now in the war, and several of her ships were based on Queenstown, and Admiral Sims, the American Admiral in command, was a frequent visitor there; in fact, for some days on one occasion he flew his flag there as C.-in-C. whilst Admiral Bayly was away. On our arrival he came on board with Admiral Bayly. We were anchored in the Roads with a lot of other merchant ships. Admiral Bayly had had no description of

us, and the two Admirals, much to our amusement and joy, steamed round our ship, examined us with glasses, and decided we were not the mystery ship they were looking for. They then went to nearly every other ship in the anchorage before finally coming to us. When on board, they had not much difficulty in finding the 4-inch gun and the tilting ones, as they were fairly visible to anyone walking on deck, but the two " cabins " quite defeated them. In fact, I was standing with Admiral Sims within a foot of the bulkhead of the " cabin " and told him there was a 12-pounder a few feet off. He thought I was pulling his leg, till, by a prearranged wink of my eye through the " scuttle," down came the cabin and the Admiral found the muzzle of a 12-pounder at his chest. With a loud shout of " Gee whiz " he took a smart step to the rear.

It might appear to have been a bit risky to disclose one of our guns like this in the Roads, but the ship was swung in a direction that prevented it being seen by anybody. It must also be remembered that by this time the mystery and secrecy of merchant ships being fitted out with guns and manned by naval crews had practically disappeared, especially in the Home ports. The title " Q " probably had something to do with this, and also the fact that there were so many of us, including the type known as the " Q " sloop, which looked neither like a sloop nor a merchant ship. The officers and men used now to go ashore in uniform. This,

of course, did not apply to non-naval ports, nor naturally when cruising at sea, and I always preferred to go to sea in dark hours, so as to be in all respects, as far as outward appearance was concerned, a whole tramp and nothing but a tramp. In fact, we continued to assume this except when actually "up harbour" in a naval port.

This new procedure of wearing uniform "up harbour" had many advantages when going ashore, as one could once more mix with ones friends and go to the club, etc., but it also had its disadvantages. The one that annoyed me most was that I could no longer grow my ginger moustache. On one occasion, by virtue of my rank, I found myself President of a Court-martial. I should imagine that the prisoner, if he had found himself confronted with a naval officer in uniform and a moustache, would have pleaded guilty to a charge of drunkenness on the spot! The double life might have become very difficult, as when in uniform the usual naval salutes had to be given, but as soon as I donned my M.O.B.C. cap I became a merchant skipper again, and it became an offence to do any saluting. But we had been so long together, and the new members of the crew had rapidly picked up the train from the old ones, that no difficulty ever arose with us. In fact, although I haven't got the exact dates, I think that for a period of just over a year I never had occasion to have to award a single punishment. Which didn't mean they were all

saints, but did mean they knew how to play the game.

Admiral Sims from this time onwards always took a great interest in mystery ships, and later in the year the Americans fitted out a ship of their own at Devonport, called the *Santee*. She was the very last word in " fitting out." I had the honour of being invited to go over her and make comments, but it was impossible to find any improvements that could be thought of. I was particularly struck with a large periscope they had, which looked like a stove pipe, but which enabled the officer, in safety below, to have a good all-round view. As bad luck would have it, this very fine ship was torpedoed on her first trip out of Queenstown, and the submarine never came to the surface.

I happened to read Admiral Sims's book about these things when I was at Greenwich War College, and I found he had described me as being " phlegmatic." Not knowing what the word meant, I inquired of the two Captains who sat either side of me at lunch that day what the word meant, without disclosing why I wanted to know. The first one replied " A silly ass," and the second one " A dull sort of blighter."

CHAPTER XII

THE SHIP WINS THE FIRST V.C.

TWENTY-FOUR hours sufficed for all that had to be done at Queenstown, and by the last day of May we were back to our old hunting-ground. We again intended to get deliberately torpedoed; but the question having arisen as to what would happen if we deliberately got torpedoed and then failed to sink the submarine, I deemed it advisable to make it quite clear that the responsibility would be solely mine, and I therefore issued a written order which said, "Should the officer of the watch see a torpedo approaching the ship, he is to increase or decrease speed as necessary to ensure it hitting." This order was duly initialled by all officers.

The submarine menace was at its height, and we had visible evidence of this a couple of mornings after we were at sea. We were steaming past the south-west corner of Ireland, when as the day broke we sighted what we at first thought was a periscope, and at once got ready for action; but we then saw several more "periscopes," and began to rub our eyes to make sure we were awake. Conning towers also appeared, and, of course, we

knew something was amiss; but it was barely light, and it wasn't till we got close up that we found a ship had been torpedoed and sunk, and between twenty and thirty men were struggling in the water amongst pieces of wreckage.

Some died before we could pick them up, as the water was bitterly cold, but we were able to rescue about twenty, two Scottish engineers and the remainder Lascars. One of the engineers related how he had been saved through standing on a horse-box, and that when the submarine tried to take him prisoner he dived into the sea, preferring to take his chance by diving and swimming to the comparative comfort of a submarine. Four of the Lascars died soon after we got them on board, and I buried them at sea.

The problem now was that I had sixteen additional men on board, fourteen of whom spoke no English, and we might at any minute meet the submarine that had done the damage; in fact, for all we knew he might be watching us carrying out our rescue work. Something had to be done at once, so I sent for the two engineer officers and told them our game and what they were to do in action. I had a look at the Lascars, who were shivering with cold and obviously not yet recovered from the shock they had already received. I decided, therefore, that no instructions were necessary, as they would make an ideal " panic party " without any explanations or rehearsals! American destroyers closed

us during the forenoon, and we were able to transfer our guests. We were never keen to meet survivors of sunken ships if anyone else was at hand to do the job, but otherwise it had to be done in the interests of humanity. In addition to the fact that they were a nuisance aboard, there was always a certain amount of risk in stopping to transfer them, and, as in so many cases, it was a choice of evils, we could either keep them on board, transfer them, or return to harbour with them. Something had to be left to chance, and I always got rid of them as quickly as I could.

On this occasion a submarine alarm was raised whilst in the process of transferring them, and the transfer had to be postponed whilst the destroyers chased around looking for periscopes. Luckily it was a false alarm.

We continued to carry out our old programme of steaming west each night and east each day, in the latitudes which ships generally used approaching the south coast of Ireland..

We had no orders about returning to harbour this time, and we all felt confident we should have another engagement before we did so. The usual reports of all sorts were received, much as has been described in my Press Bureau, and it seemed only a matter of time. We were very pleased with our ship, and we lived in luxury and comfort compared with the good old *Farnborough*; with the men under the poop, the accommodation was not so

crowded, and I had a real cabin on the bridge, whereas in the *Farnborough* I only had a make-shift one, with one door, which was always the weather one, especially up the Gulf! The *Pargust* never having carried coal, we got into the habit of keeping her a bit cleaner externally than the *Farnborough*, still as a tramp, but of a more respectable type. Of course we didn't overdo it, and had the necessary amount of rust marks and patches of red lead about the place. Masters no longer carried wives on board, so the lady and the baby had long since been paid off.

Our dummy gun caused much merriment during the cruise, as of course as Master I was keen on the gun's crew being " efficient," and so in broad daylight the two bluejackets would be seen religiously polishing it and practising loading! It was not only the proper procedure, but it was a great thing at this game, when you were asking to be torpedoed, to keep everyone's spirits up by any means I could think of.

On June 6th Truscott informed me we should see a submarine to-morrow. On inquiring how he knew, he said that a bird had flown into my cabin, and although it had never struck me particularly before, a similar thing had happened on each occasion of engaging a submarine—and sure enough the omen came true.

June 7th was a nasty-looking day; there was a choppy sea, heavy rain, and thick weather. We

were steering east on our " homeward " course, and at eight o'clock in the morning, when we were in latitude 51° 50′ N. and longitude 11° 50′ W., a torpedo was fired at us from the starboard side at close range, and we couldn't have avoided it if we had wanted to. It jumped out of the water, showing it was running shallow, and hit the ship practically on the water-line bang in the engine-room, making a 40-foot hole and bursting the after-bulkhead. The engine-room and boiler-room formed one compartment, and were at once filled with water, also No. 5 hold.

The alarm had already been sounded, and on this occasion there was no need to say " Torpedo hit," as, in addition to the lesson learnt in Q.5, the explosion being so high up had made an extra loud crash, and the loungers had been warned that a " hit " would be in place of the verbal order. The starboard lifeboat was blown to smithereens, only one little bit of wood, which stuck on the aerial, being left.

The helm was put to starboard as we were hit, in order to form a lee for the boats. I watched the panic party rushing to the boats in the latest approved fashion. The remaining one lifeboat and two dinghys were lowered and filled with the crew. Hereford, after taking the Master's best cap, seized his beloved stuffed parrot, and like a brave Master was the last to leave the ship, except for the " unfortunate " firemen who crawled out at the

last moment. I also had to watch our defensive dummy gun being " abandoned " without firing a shot, in spite of going through pantomimic performances of trying to " load it " ! The Chief found his engine-room already occupied with water, and had to take up a hiding billet again.

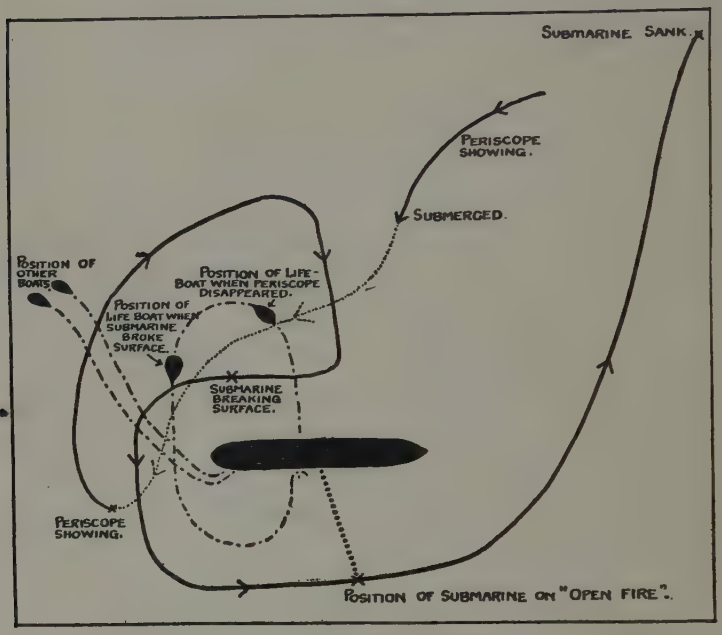
I happened to know that Smith was again the engineer officer on watch at the time, and took it for granted he was killed, when, to my immense astonishment, I saw him staggering along towards his " boat station " within a minute of the explosion. He was drenched to the skin, and didn't appear to know what he was doing. I had him led quickly to the saloon and locked up there, as being the safest and quickest way to get rid of him. When I saw him afterwards he hadn't any idea of what had happened, nor does he know to this day. He was standing in the engine-room by the starboard side of the ship when he heard the alarm sound; he just had time to wonder where the torpedo would hit us, when it suddenly became black and " he was swimming in the water for hours." His duty after being torpedoed was to join the panic party, and obviously his subconscious mind was leading him, trying to make him do it. It was a most extraordinary escape, as the main engines, which were farther away from the ship's side than he was, were knocked down, all the engine-room ladders and gratings were blown away, and it can only be assumed that he was blown clean up through the engine-room

hatch. After months in hospital and having a lot of pieces of coal, steel, etc., removed from his inside, where they had been blown, he recovered. The man in the stokehold was blown to pieces, but the second stoker was the most fortunate of the lot, as he had just been sent on deck with a message.

To go back to the action : Hereford again went in charge of the boats. At first we could see no signs of the submarine, but as the last boat was shoving off at 8.15, the periscope was seen watching us from the port side about 400 yards off. He turned and came straight towards the ship for his inspection. I glanced through my slit and saw the gun's crew on the forecastle lying as still as the deck itself—not a speck of a face to be seen. They knew nothing of what was going on beyond that the ship had been torpedoed and their duty for the time being was to pretend to be part of the deck. My admiration for them was intense, as although everyone else on board was concealed, yet the others were in places where they could anyhow breathe in comfort and move their muscles. The submarine, with only periscope showing, came to within about 50 feet of the ship and passed close to the boats. He then submerged altogether. This was at 8.25. A few minutes later the periscope was again seen close astern and passing to our starboard side. Jack Orr was lying at the wheel, and I said, " For goodness' sake don't move." He said, " It's all right, sir ; I'm a lifebelt," and I saw he had pulled

a lifebelt over the most prominent part of his anatomy.

The signalman and I had to do a treble belly-crawl this time: the first time as the submarine was passing astern; then after inspecting our starboard



PLAN OF "PARGUST'S" ACTION.

side he returned again to the port side where the boats were; and again when he came up the starboard side. The boats with the wind and sea had in the meantime drifted to our port quarter.

At 8.33 the submarine broke surface on our port side about 50 yards off the ship, but he didn't open his conning tower; and although one shot might

with luck have disabled him, I preferred to wait a more favourable chance when the lid was open. I had complete faith in my crew remaining motionless. The submarine was parallel to the ship and pointing towards our stern, where the lifeboat was, with Hereford standing up in his " Master's " cap. He knew I didn't want to open fire on a bearing on the quarter if I could help it, as my 4-inch gun would not depress far enough. He, therefore, with great cunning and coolness, proceeded to pull towards my starboard side. The submarine followed him round, of course taking a bigger circle.

By the time Hereford was on our starboard beam I could see from the bridge the submarine coming close up under our starboard quarter. His lid was now open, and an officer—presumably the Captain—was on top with a megaphone, apparently shouting directions to the boat and then giving orders down the conning tower. I never took my eyes off this officer: as long as he was up I knew I could withhold my fire. When the submarine was clear of the quarter, Hereford realised I could open fire at any minute, and started to pull towards the ship, his job being done. The boat's crew was starting to laugh at seeing the submarine being slowly decoyed to its destruction, and they had to be cautioned to remember that they were shipwrecked mariners and had lost everything—it would never have done for the crew of the submarine to see them laughing.

The submarine evidently got annoyed at seeing the boat pulling back, as he started to semaphore, and a second man appeared with a rifle or Maxim. There was nothing more to wait for—two men were outside, and the submarine herself was abeam of us about 50 yards away—and so at 8.36, thirty-six minutes after being torpedoed, I gave the order to open fire. At last the forecastle " deck " were able to stand up and, tilting their gun up, join with the remainder in a heavy fire. The first shot hit the conning tower, and shot after shot went the same way ; it was practically point-blank range. A torpedo was also fired, but did not hit : it was really only fired as an afterthought, as gunfire on this occasion was available.

The submarine started to heel over to port after the first two or three shots. She was steaming ahead, but stopped when on my bow with a heavy list to port and oil coming out of her. She opened the after-hatch ; a large number of the crew came out of both this hatch and the conning tower, and held up their hands, and some of them waved. I took this as a signal of surrender and at once ordered " cease fire," but no sooner had we ceased firing when she started ahead again. The men on the after-part of her were washed into the sea. Although she was apparently done, I was obliged to open fire again, my ship being helpless, and to avoid any risk of the submarine escaping in the mist. It was lucky I had a gun on the forecastle,

as for about half a minute it was the only gun that would bear.

The forecastle gun's crew must have felt some satisfaction at a reward for their long wait. The ship being totally disabled, I could not turn her to bring the other guns to bear, and it was not till the submarine herself got clear of my bow that the other guns could join in firing the last salvo. After a few shots an explosion took place in the submarine, and she fell over and sank about 300 yards from the ship. The last seen of her was the sharp end of her bow with someone clinging to it. From the time of opening fire till the time she sank was four minutes, thirty-eight rounds being fired altogether during this time.

Several men were seen in the water after the submarine sank so the boats went to their assistance, and after a good pull to windward they were in time to save two, but I couldn't help smiling when Hereford reported, " We've again got a sample of each." As in our previous action, wireless signals were now sent out for help, for although we were in a far more stable condition than Q.5—as only the centre part of the ship was flooded—yet we had no engines and so were helpless. I, of course, informed Admiral Bayly of the action, and he sent us a wireless signal : " C.-in-C. to *Pargust*. I congratulate you and your crew most heartily on your magnificent record, and deeply regret the loss of one of your splendid ship's company."

The prisoners in the meantime were brought on to the bridge in the chart-room. The first brought in was an officer, who, in addition to being wet through and covered with oil, had been wounded in his hand. After asking him his name, he collapsed and was violently sick. I then asked him the number of his boat. He got up, stood to attention, and said, " Sir, I am a naval officer and will not speak." I said, " Well, you're a brave man," and sent him down for a hot drink and a shift of clothing. The submarine turned out to be U.C.29—one of the minelayer class—and no doubt the explosion at the end was caused by one of the mines. It was a long way out for a submarine of this class to be, as the water was too deep for laying mines.

We lay inert with nothing to be done till 12.30, when the *Crocus* arrived, and in a very seamanlike and expeditious manner took us in tow and towed us for twenty-four hours. The Queenstown sloops earned a grand reputation during the war for the magnificent work they did in towing ships in addition to their other duties.

H.M.S. *Zinnia* and U.S.S. *Cushing* also arrived and escorted the ship after the prisoners had been transferred to the former with a hurried note from me to the Captain about them. She then took them direct to harbour.

The tow was uneventful, there being no immediate danger as long as the bulkheads held. All the

"THE SUBMARINE FINALLY SANK WITH A MAN CLINGING TO THE BOWS."

armament had been concealed again, and we were ready for action, but with an escort such an event was unlikely.

We eventually arrived at Queenstown at 3 p.m. on June 8th, and were towed up to the Dockyard. As this was the first time we had had the honour of being escorted by one of the American destroyers, I broke all my usual orders, and called all hands on deck to give three cheers for U.S.S. *Cushing* as she parted company off Roche's Point. In addition to being Allies, we had the great thing in common of being under the same Commander-in-Chief. Admiral Bayly came to meet us outside the harbour and to see what could be done, telling us we were a great asset to the country. At this time it was not known what damage had been done to the engines, and whether she could be refitted in a reasonable time or not, and I requested to be towed to Plymouth, as being a bigger yard I thought it would expedite repairs or the fitting out of a new ship. We were taken up harbour and placed alongside the dockyard for the night, whilst the Admiralty were being communicated with. The following day approval came for us to go to Plymouth, and we started at once in tow of the tug. On the way round we, as was usual at sea, remained ready for instant action. I had been offered an escort, but preferred to sail without. I thought we made rather a good bait, as, if attacked, the tug would have come alongside, taken off the panic party, and left us for

the rest of the " stunt." We got there safely after a tow altogether of over 400 miles. The ship was dry-docked as soon as possible, and after all the water had been got out, it was found that the repairs would take so long that we got permission to pay her off and start again.

My official report had in the meantime been sent in. I had no difficulty in stating accurately the exact time of events, as Nunn was at the fire-control station and exchange on the bridge within hail of me and noted everything down as it happened ; but when it came to remarking about the conduct of my crew, it became more difficult, as on the occasion of Q.5. One could only say the same as before, that it was a 100 per cent. affair. Any one individual could have ruined the whole show, and it must be remembered that I wasn't over-staffed with officers, and even if I had been it wouldn't have helped much, had some individual given the show away. For instance, the men who formed the forecastle " deck " : had one man moved an inch he would have spoilt the whole show, and it takes a little doing to lie motionless, as they had to, after the ship was torpedoed, for thirty-six minutes.

It may appear that the men in the boats had a fairly " quiet " number, after they had merely run the risk of being torpedoed ; but this was not the case, as I had always told them that the chances would be that the submarine would make towards the boats, and I might find it necessary to open fire

when it was actually amongst them, and on this occasion the lifeboat didn't miss it by much. Had the two men on the conning tower showed any suspicion and gone below, I should have been obliged to open fire with our own men in the line of fire. They knew it, and not only never wavered, but, as already mentioned, had to be reprimanded for being too light-hearted.

We were indeed fortunate in only having one man killed by the torpedo—a very fine fellow—Stoker Petty Officer Isaac Radford. After our arrival at Plymouth we were able to bury him with naval honours. Smith had a narrow squeak, not only did he come out alive, but his pig-headed Scottish blood got him over his sufferings and he served again before the war ended. Admiral Bayly summed my crew up by saying that they had shown a "disciplined and most efficient loyalty in *Farnborough* and *Pargust*, have been twice torpedoed, and are a great asset to the country."

I was ordered to convey to the officers and men under my orders the Admiralty's "high commendation of the admirable discipline and courage shown by them in this encounter, which will stand high in the records of gallantry of the Royal Navy." The ship, as before, was also awarded £1,000.

The greatest honour of all was awarded the ship by H.M. the King, when he approved of one Victoria Cross being awarded to an officer and one to a man

of H.M.S. *Pargust*, the recipient in each case being selected by the officers and men respectively, in accordance with Clause 13 of the Statutes of the Victoria Cross.

This clause stated that " It is ordained that in the event of any unit of our naval . . . force, consisting in the case of our Navy of a squadron, flotilla, or ship's company . . . having distinguished itself collectively by the performance of an act of heroic gallantry or daring in the presence of the enemy in such a way that the Admiral . . . in command of the Force to which such a unit belongs is unable to single out any individual as especially pre-eminent in gallantry or daring, then one or more of the officers . . . seamen in the ranks comprising the unit shall be selected to be recommended to us for the award of the Victoria Cross in the following manner . . . The selection to be by secret ballot . . . "

This was indeed a very great honour, as it was the first time in the history of the Navy that a whole ship had been so honoured.

My officers did me the honour of expressing their wish that I should be the officer recipient, but I, of course, could not agree to this, as I already felt that the Victoria Cross I wore was on behalf of my crew and through no special act of my own.

I arranged for the ballot to be carried out by an officer outside the ship, and the Victoria Cross was awarded to Lieutenant R. N. Stuart, D.S.O.,

H.M.S. "PARGUST" IN DRY DOCK, AFTER BEING TORPEDOED IN THE ENGINE-ROOM.

R.N.R., the First Lieutenant, and Seaman W. Williams, R.N.R., from Wales.

I have already mentioned how any one man could spoil the show : I might have added that one man could save the show. When the explosion of the torpedo took place, the releasing weight of the starboard gun-ports was freed by the force of the explosion, and but for the great presence of mind of Williams in taking the whole weight of the port on himself and so preventing it falling down and prematurely exposing the gun, the action might never have taken place.

Some years after the war the Admiralty decided that in cases of this sort a notation was to be made on each man's service certificate to the effect that he had taken part in a ballot for the award of a V.C., the wording being as follows :

" So-and-so participated in ballot for award of V.C. to members of ship's company of H.M.S. *Pargust*."

The ship's career as *Pargust* had been a brief one, but not uneventful, and she did her part in helping to make history.

AWARDS MADE AFTER SINKING U.C.29

Victoria Cross

Lieutenant Ronald Neil Stuart, D.S.O., R.N.R.
Seaman William Williams, D.S.M., R.N.R.

Distinguished Service Order

Acting-Lieutenant Francis R. Hereford, D.S.C., R.N.R.

Bar to Distinguished Service Order

Captain Gordon Campbell, V.C., D.S.O., R.N.

Bar to Distinguished Service Cross

Acting-Lieutenant Richard P. Nisbet, D.S.C., R.N.R.

Assistant-Paymaster Reginald A. Nunn, D.S.C., R.N.R.

Distinguished Service Medal

Seaman James Thomson, R.N.R.
Signalman Charles W. Hurrell, R.N.V.R.
P.O. Ernest Pitcher.
Stoker George Rees, R.N.R.
Seaman John Stephen Martindale, R.N.R.
Leading Stoker William H. King, R.N.R.
Leading Seaman Ernest A. Veale.
S.S.A. Alfred F. J. Couch.

Mentioned in Despatches

Engineer-Lieutenant L. S. Loveless, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N.R.

Engineer-Sub-Lieutenant James W. Grant, D.S.C., R.N.R.

The Ship wins the first V.C.

Engineer-Sub-Lieutenant John Smith, D.S.C., R.N.R. (wounded).
Warrant Telegraphist Allan Andrews, D.S.M., R.N.R.
Chief Petty Officer George Henry Truscott, D.S.M.
Wireless Telegraph Operator William Statham.
Leading Seaman Edward Cooper.
Seaman Robert Pitt, R.N.R.
Seaman John Keane, R.N.R.
Stoker Petty Officer I. Davies.
Chief Steward Alfred C. Townshend.

Promoted to Captain

Commander Gordon Campbell, V.C., D.S.O., R.N.

CHAPTER XIII

H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN," JUNE TO AUGUST 1917

THE paying off of *Pargust* took longer than Q.5, as we had to dock the ship and then clear her ourselves. A good deal of the coal had found its way into the stokehold, and all this had to be got out in addition to the other formalities, and of course on this occasion all the stores had to be returned.

It was whilst employed on paying off I was so late getting away from the ship one night that I missed the last train which takes you across Brunel Bridge, connecting Devonshire and Cornwall, to Saltash, where I lived. I decided to walk, but arriving at the Devon side of the bridge, I was held up by a "Halt! Who goes there?" I found I was up against the Plymouth Volunteers. I was in uniform, and asked permission to walk across the bridge, which incidentally is only for rail traffic. The Sergeant finally informed me he would let me go, provided I had no objection to marching under escort. Being used to that sort of thing, I readily assented, and fell in between two privates, whilst Saltash was communicated with and asked to send a relief escort to meet half-way. We started

off in military style, but unfortunately we met an express train, and it became a question of "safety first." The military step was broken, and we took cover; but as soon as the train was passed, the Volunteers, like good old soldiers, took charge of me till I was turned over to the Saltash Guard with "a naval officer returning from duty."

I happened to meet the "Officer of the Guard," an old friend of mine, next day, and asked him if anyone was allowed to walk across the bridge. He informed me with a straight face but a twinkle in his eye, "On no account."

After getting *Pargust* in and the damage being ascertained, no time was lost in asking for another ship to fit out. Cardiff again supplied the new ship, this time the *Dunraven*, a ship of about 3,000 tons, but slightly larger than either *Farnborough* or *Pargust*. I decided on this occasion not to change the name at all, and we always (except for cruising purposes) remained *Dunraven*.

She was a double well-deck ship, and had a much larger poop than her predecessors: her length was 331 feet, as compared with the 317 feet of the *Pargust*. Her one fault, as far as I could see, was that the donkey-boiler was down below, and would not be available if torpedoed in the engine-room, but she was so suitable otherwise this had to be accepted.

We were again fortunate in being able to be fitted out at Devonport, as, in addition to the fact that Mr. Mason and his assistants, Mr. Freathy and Mr.

Sitters, were still there, a lot of others again took a personal interest in us and gave us of their best. Devonport also had the advantage of being at least temporarily the home port of the crew, and so the evenings could be spent in some well-earned recreation. During the fitting out of *Dunraven* I had, as in the case of *Pargust*, much to occupy my time as well as to superintend the fitting out. Nearly all officers who were appointed to command mystery ships were sent to me for such assistance and advice as I could give them, and in addition I had to prepare general memoranda on the subject.

I also had to keep very up-to-date with all the latest information concerning the movements of submarines in our waters and the various actions with them. The crew lived in the Barracks and came down to the ship each morning or not as required, according to whether they could assist the Dockyard or be in the way. If not required aboard, gun drill would be carried out at the Gunnery School. Jack Orr not being required one day, I asked him if he would go out to my house and tidy up the garden for me, and sure enough he did : when I got home I found all the stones had been whitewashed like a coastguard cottage, and my budding seeds rooted up as " weeds." As he explained, the garden looked a bit more " shipshape " now.

We now had the experience of two ships to work on in fitting out the *Dunraven*, and improvements

were made in many details. Our main armament was the same as *Pargust*, and we placed the guns in similar positions—a tilting 12-pounder on the forecastle, one each side in cabins similar to the *Pargust*, a tilting 12-pounder on the after-end of the boat-deck, and a 4-inch gun on the poop.

We also got a real defensive gun, a $2\frac{1}{2}$-pounder, but our dummy 12-pounder had been salved from *Pargust*, and we carried it on board, on the mess-deck, as a curio. The fitting of the poop played a large part in the subsequent action, and is worth following with some care.

Right aft on the usual raised platform, such as was fitted in other tramp steamers, was the $2\frac{1}{2}$-pounder visible to all. On the poop deck, which had been slightly sunk in order to reduce the height of the gun, was the 4-inch gun. It was in a hatch, as in *Pargust*. In order to enable the gun to have a practically all-round fire, it was necessary to arrange for the rail round the poop and for the shrouds of the mainmast to be easily removed. The sides of the hatch were hinged to fall outwards by their own weight. The rails round the poop were hinged to fall inwards, and they were connected by wires through various fair-leads to the sides of the hatch.

The rigging of the mainmast was also fitted with slips, which in their turn were connected to the sides of the hatch, which was kept up by a tumbler and pin. The net result was that when the pin was removed, the sides of the hatch fell out and

lay flat on the deck; in doing this they pulled the rails inwards and they fell on the deck; the slips of the rigging were released and the shrouds fell towards the mast, giving the gun a wide arc of fire. All the leads and blocks of this arrangement had to be kept in the most perfect order, as although the pin on which the collapse of the whole contraption depended was securely kept in place and took

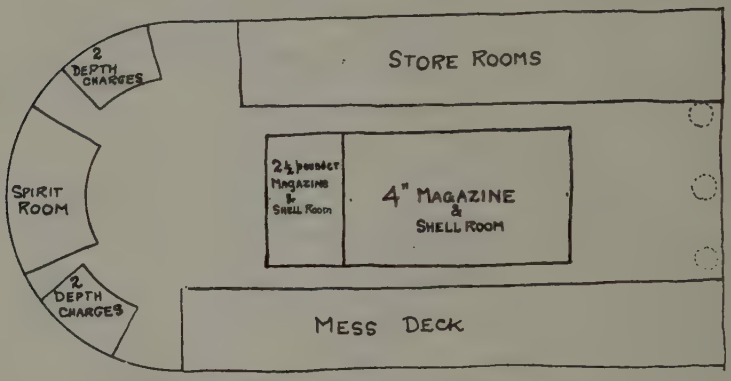
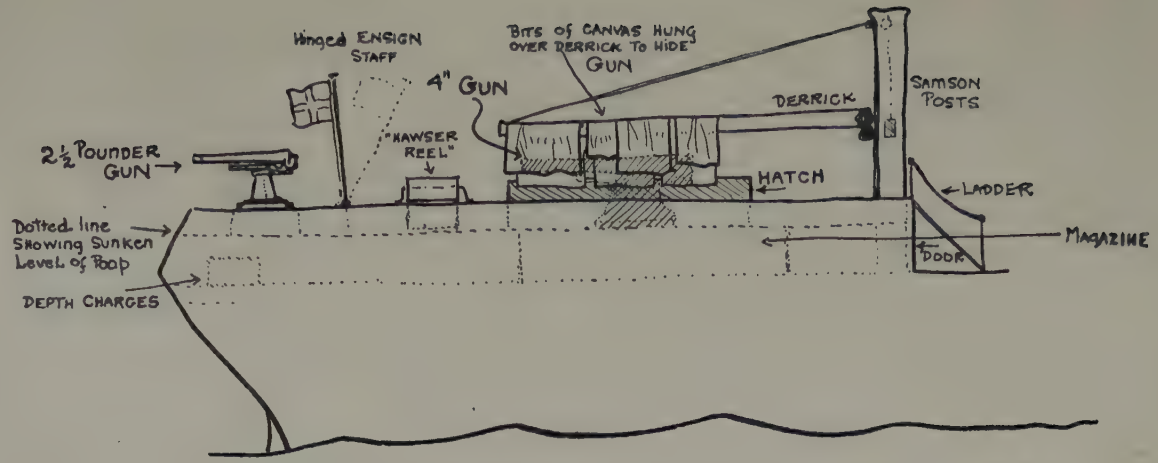


DIAGRAM OF " DUNRAVEN'S " POOP INTERNALLY.

a good blow to remove in order to avoid any risk of an explosion prematurely removing it, yet when once it was removed, then it was essential that no speck of grit or clotted oil should be in the way of a complete collapse. The arrangement may appear rather complicated, and so it did to us when we first tried to make it all collapse; but when once everything was made to hinge at exactly the right angle (and it must be remembered that the stern of the poop was round), there was no further



PLAN OF " DUNRAVEN'S " POOP ON DECK.

trouble. This idea of having the rails and rigging made to collapse had not been thought of when we fitted out *Pargust*, and it was a very great improvement, though, as it turned out, it never came into practical use.

On the front end of the poop were three samson-posts which could be removed or not at will. On the centre one was a derrick which lay directly over the top of the gun ; the topping lift of it led to the top of the centre samson-post and had a weight attached to it inside. The end of the derrick was attached to the after-side of the hatch. Lying on the derrick were odd bits of dirty canvas hanging up to dry, or washed clothes, or a rope flaked down : whatever it happened to be, it completely concealed the part of the gun which was above the hatch.

When the sides of the hatch collapsed, as already explained, the derrick was released also, and the weight inside the samson-post pulled the derrick, together with what was on it, up in the air and clear of the gun. Just beside the hatch was what appeared to be an ordinary hawser reel—a round steel drum on which ropes are reeled. In reality it was a dummy with slits cut in it, and a small periscope ; this was the place for the officer of the gun, Bonner, and he got into it from underneath, through a trap-door, in a similar way to the crew getting into the gun hatch.

The inside of the poop was quite a large space ; in the middle right aft were store-rooms and the

spirit-room, on either side of which were two depth charges ready to be released through the stern ports. These depth charges were of the large type, which each contained 300 lb. of explosive.

In the middle part of the poop space were the 4-inch magazine and shell-room and the 2½-pounder magazine, all ready for supplying the guns if the "ready supply" (which was always kept at the guns themselves) became exhausted. The roof of these magazines was the deck of the poop. The 12-pounder magazines were, as before, on the mess-decks. On either side of the magazines was a small alleyway, and against the ship's side a mess-deck on one side for the guns' crews and store-rooms on the other. The other arrangements in the ship were similar to *Pargust*, including the two torpedo tubes.

At this time in the war nearly all merchant ships were fitted with wireless, so, instead of concealing our aerial, we had the ordinary arrangement, and it could be seen we were so fitted.

It happened that about this time a large quantity of railways trucks were being sent to the Mediterranean—I think for Salonika—and so we decided to have some ready. We therefore had four very fine, full-sized railway trucks made of canvas and wood and easily collapsible, so that we could carry them or not as we liked. It turned out afterwards that this idea was one of our luckiest "brain-waves."

Whilst fitting out, news was received that

Lieutenant-Commander Hallwright, who had towed us in Q.5, had been killed in action. Details showed that he had been lying in his look-out at the end of the bridge of his Q-sloop H.M.S. *Heather* when a shell from a submarine had struck the ship and a splinter had penetrated the deck, hit his head, and killed him. On hearing of this, I arranged for the ends of the bridge to be armoured with 1-inch plating, which, of course, had the wood outside it: this gave each end of the bridge a three-sided plated look-out with slits cut, and but for this I should not be writing this book now, for both Hereford and I would have joined the great majority. We also arranged for a further innovation in the form of a perforated steam-pipe, which was led round the upper-works. Steam was admitted from a valve on the bridge, and, of course, when admitted it formed a cloud of steam all over the centre of the ship, the pipe being perforated with tiny holes. The idea of the thing was that in the event of our being shelled, by turning the steam on we could pretend we had been hit in the engine-room if we wished to do so.

It is a strange coincidence how things invariably come in threes, and these three innovations—the railways trucks, armoured end of bridge, and false steam-pipe—all played an important part in the next action, although we had never required them before.

I couldn't, even if I wished to, say who actually thought of these innovations, or of the methods of

disguising the guns and the various other improvements which had been made from time to time in the whole outfit since we commenced the job. We were always discussing the subject in the mess, and also the men were encouraged to put forward ideas. The possibility of there being such a thing as an Inventions Board didn't enter our heads at that time, and perhaps it was as well, the good of the Service and the success of the war being the only matters of real importance.

My crew came on with me from *Pargust ;* small changes only were made, owing to sickness, etc., but as before all the crew were now volunteers, and my friend with the " upstanding " hair was the first to volunteer, although he had now been torpedoed twice.

My First Lieutenant, Stuart, had a chance given him to command a Q-sloop of his own, and loath as I was to part with him, it was obviously for his own good and for that of the Service. I filled his place with Lieutenant Bonner, who was serving as my Second Officer. I had run across him casually at the Barracks, and he struck me as being cut out for the job. He had had a varied experience. At the beginning of the war he was in a tramp steamer at Antwerp, and being anxious for a scrap, he took the shortest path and joined the Belgian Army. He was removed from that as a suspected person, came over to England, and volunteered for the R.N.R. Volunteers not being required

at that time, he joined the R.N.V.R. at the Crystal Palace; being a fine-looking fellow, he found himself a Petty Officer, and back again in Antwerp with the Naval Division. He didn't see the fun of being interned with the remainder, so, making his way down to the Scheldt, he secured a boat and rowed himself down, and in due course got back to the Crystal Palace. His conduct not meeting with approval, he was sent to a cruiser in the 10th Cruiser Squadron as an ordinary seaman; but after a few weeks of this it was discovered that R.N.R. officers were required after all, and he got his commission as Sub-Lieutenant R.N.R., and joined the Trawler Section at Larne. I took him on as Second Lieutenant, and now as First.

One of the most painful things I ever had to do was in connection with Smith. I had been obliged to fill his place, as, in addition to bad blood-poisoning, his nerves were shattered; but just when we were nearing our completion, he came all the way from Scotland, without anyone's permission, and said he insisted on sailing again. At first I couldn't refuse him to his face, but I could see he wasn't fit for it and reluctantly had to decoy him to hospital. But like the rest of them, he didn't want to give in, and we all missed him and his dog, which, like himself, had come to grief in the engine-room.

Thanks to the steady working of the Dockyard and all concerned, we fitted this ship out in what

must have been a record time. Although all the crew had been kept together and were working on the fitting out, we didn't actually commission till they were able to live on board, which was July 28th—seven weeks after our last action and eleven days before our final one.

The *Dunraven* was a beautiful ship, and all her arrangements in every detail were as perfect as we could wish for. The gadgets we wanted fitted, the special stores we required, and a hundred and one things were nearly all outside the ordinary run of the "Naval Service," and yet we never wanted for anything that the Dockyard could possibly do for us or give us. They even fitted my cabin to my liking, and built me a small bath-room on the bridge!

There was one thing we missed in all our ships, including this one, and that was electric light. We only had a small dynamo specially fitted for the wireless, which wasn't supposed to be used for any other purpose. But we generally managed to wangle a few bulbs and some leads, and, when out of sight of the Dockyard, we were able to rig up a few electric lights in the ship, which we used when in harbour and were not using the wireless.

Soon after the Armistice was signed, when our actions had been published, I took the opportunity of expressing what we felt in a letter to our C.-in-C. I said:

"Now that reports of the actions of Q-ships have

been published, showing as they do how necessary it was for the disguises of the ships to be perfect to ensure success, the inspection by the enemy taking place from a few yards, I should like to be allowed to express the sense of gratitude myself, officers, and men feel towards the various Departments of Devonport and Haulbowline Dockyards who assisted towards this end.

"The three ships which I commanded—*Farnborough* (Q.5), *Pargust*, and *Dunraven*—were all fitted out at Devonport, *Farnborough* being refitted and improved at Haulbowline; and thanks to the help, energy, and skilful work of the Dockyards, we were able to face the enemy with a complete confidence that the outward appearance of our ship and the rapid and efficient method of discarding our disguise would ensure success as long as we did our part. Such successes as we had were in no small part due to the Dockyard, and we thank them."

The Admiral Superintendent sent a reply in the following terms:

"On behalf of the officers and men of the Dockyard who were engaged in the fitting out of Q-ships, I desire to express their grateful appreciation of this generous acknowledgment of the share they were privileged to take in the efforts so gallantly and successfully made by the Royal Navy to combat and overcome the submarine menace."

It mustn't be thought that we loved the Dockyard so much that we always wanted them on board: as soon as we commissioned we got rid of them as fast as we could, and went out to the Sound for a good " rub up " in our drill and to get everything tested.

As in the case of *Pargust*, we did some drill in the Dockyard to see that all the fittings were in working order. Of course our drill in the Dockyard merely consisted of ordinary gun drill that might be seen anywhere; we didn't do any of the panic drill or give away any secrets that the Dockyard couldn't see for themselves.

The submarine activity was so intense that, as in *Pargust*, there was no going round to Berehaven for a shake-down—at least we had to be ready to meet a submarine once clear of the harbour. I have often wondered since what would have happened in the *Farnborough* if we had met a submarine the first day out, with a totally incompetent and sea-sick crew on board; but now, once we had everything in working order, done gun trials off the Eddystone with an escort to protect us, and had a few days' shake-down, we felt ready and confident for anything. The depth charges we had on board had some new fittings to them, and I asked for an expert to be sent down from the torpedo-ship. An old Pensioner Warrant Officer was sent; he had not been told who or what we were, and as we were all in our " get-up " rig he thought we were an ordinary

tramp. He confided to Truscott that he thought I was a bit young to be in command of such a big steamer, and in any case he thought it was asking for trouble in putting depth charges on board of tramps at all. He said, " You fellows don't know how to use these things."

While he was carrying out his examination I happened to walk along and ask how he was getting on. He treated me with average contempt, and proceeded to tell me all about depth charges, piling it on no end. After a few minutes I had had enough, and in order to get away I said, " Well, come along to my cabin when you are finished," and I then walked off. He whispered to Truscott, " I'm off now. I know what some of these skippers are—they forget. And I'm not going to miss my tot this time."

Having had a yarn with him and heard how he reckoned the war ought to be run, I went to the top of the gangway with him. As it happened, one of the boat's crew was an old shipmate of mine and recognised me. When the Warrant Officer got into the boat with the remark to me of, " So long, old cock," or some such expression, instead of the man keeping his mouth shut he at once told him who I was. I thought the Warrant Officer would die on the spot !

Of course, in Plymouth Sound, where other merchant ships were lying, all our pantomime drill was done during darkness, except for what could be

done " inside the ship," such as gun drill in the cabins, etc. During the day we lay without many signs of activity, like the rest of them—perhaps a man or two spent a few hours scraping and red-

" SO LONG, OLD COCK."

leading—but nothing was done which might arouse suspicion. The crew were of course quite perfect by this time at doing the " correct thing " in harbour with other merchant ships close, but on one earlier occasion I discovered a man up the funnel, red-

leading it, not only on a Sunday, but also dressed in a tailcoat which he had brought back from leave with him. There had always been a danger of that sort of thing, as once sailors are allowed to " dress up," there is no knowing what may happen next.

One afternoon the Missions to Seamen Chaplain came off when on his tour round visiting the ships. He was told he was not allowed on board. He wanted, he said, to look up the men in the fore-castle ; but permission being denied, he handed out a lot of tracts in all languages, with the remark that he expected we had some Scandinavians for'ard ! He had done his job with zeal, but we couldn't help laughing at the idea of the Scandinavians.

On August 4th, after three or four days in the Sound, and now feeling quite ready for any eventuality, we sailed. Had the crew been a new one, I couldn't have done it, because I have already made it clear that so many details had to be made perfect that weeks or months were required to train a crew ; but I had the old crowd, and the few new ones were soon imbued with the spirit of the old.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST ACTION

My original intention on leaving Plymouth was to have gone direct to Queenstown to show our new ship to the C.-in-C., but submarines were busy in the Bay, and I decided to make a detour in that direction. So on leaving Plymouth we set course for Gibraltar, sailing as a Blue Funnel steamer with our upper-deck cargo of four railway trucks—obviously bound for Army service in the East and, therefore, an attractive bait. Just before we sailed an R.N.V.R. Lieutenant had come on board with some "Notices to Mariners," and was most indignant with me for not having a gangway down for him and making him climb up a rope ladder. Having delivered his goods, he departed, still very annoyed, with a note in his book that we were bound for France carrying building material!

During the first three days out we received wireless reports which indicated that an enemy submarine was busy in the Bay, and furthermore that her commander appeared to favour his gun in preference to torpedoes, as ships were being attacked by gunfire.

This method of attack was not what we wanted,

as although even in a torpedo attack the odds were in favour of the submarine, yet in a gunfire attack the odds became still more in her favour. She could shell a ship at long range, and there would be no particular reason why she should close until the ship she was firing at was put out of action. In a ship such as we were, a lucky shot from her might " touch off " any of the ready-use ammunition which was at the guns, extending really the whole length of the ship, and a still more lucky shot might get one or more of the magazines. In the case of being torpedoed, there was a reasonable chance of decoying her to come close to the ship ; but why should she, if she was going to destroy her quarry by long-range bombardment ?

How was this sort of attack to be dealt with ? When ships were for the most part not defensively armed, the gunfire attack was a close-range one ; but now the submarines always kept their distance or chose a bearing that suited them. If the merchant ship replied with her gun, the submarine either kept out of range, or if the shots were falling close to her, she could dive.

The ship was a big target to the submarine and the submarine was a small target to the ship. We had thought out a long-range gunfire attack in harbour, and agreed that a torpedo attack, although a big gamble, gave more hopes of success, but we had arranged every conceivable detail for attempting to decoy a submarine close to us in the event of a

long-range gunfire attack. On no account did I intend to open fire on her at a greater range than 1,000 yards, unless a premature explosion or other accident disclosed our identity.

And so now, when we expected gunfire attack, we felt confident of dealing with it. From our wireless reports we appeared to be closing towards this gunfiring submarine, and on the night of August 7th—acting on our estimation—I altered course to the northward on a homeward track to meet her. This necessitated collapsing the railway trucks and laying them on the deck, as no ships carried railway trucks to England.

August 7th had been a very still day, with fog-banks hanging around; there seemed to be a general air of expectancy on board, and we wondered how long it would be before we met the foe. In the afternoon there was in sight a three-masted schooner, painted white, and looking a perfect picture. She suddenly disappeared in the fog, and I would not have given it another thought but for a conversation that was overheard in the galley (kitchen) that night. The men, after falling out from their guns, would gather here for a yarn before turning in. On this night the conversation started with: "I wonder what luck this ship will have?" "Same as last," someone replied. "I expect we will strike a tin fish" (nickname for torpedo), "and pretty quick too," chipped in one of the old salts. "I've heard of the Phantom Ship in the Bay of Biscay before,

but I never believed it till I and several others saw it this afternoon. There she was on our starboard beam, when suddenly she vanished. Bad sign—something happens to the ship that sights her, so I'm told."

Someone started to ridicule the idea.

"Coming events cast their shadow," another replied. "Don't you remember how the birds used to fly into the skipper's cabin? And when we said it was a good omen, you laughed then."

One of the wireless ratings who had been standing at the door said, "Well, it is funny you should be talking like this, because I've had a feeling all day that I am going to be wounded, and I've gone out of my way to have a good bath, so as to be nice and clean if anything happens."

As he was saying it, another wireless rating entered and said, "That's funny, 'cos I've just had a bath for the same reason."

No wonder sailors are superstitious, as by a strange coincidence, or whatever you like to call it, the man who made the remark about "coming events" was mortally wounded the following day, and the two wireless ratings were both seriously wounded.

On August 8th—four days after leaving harbour—we sighted a submarine. It was at 10.58 in the forenoon, when we were in latitude 48° N. and longitude of 7° 37′ W. and doing a zigzag course, as all merchant ships did in those days.

The submarine was sighted on the horizon just before our starboard beam, and she was steering towards the ship. We assumed our usual rôle of a bad look-out and did nothing. She remained in sight till 11.17, when she submerged. We still hoped she was going to torpedo us, and she gave us a long time to wait and think about it; but our forecast from the wireless reports proved correct, and at 11.43, 45 minutes after we had sighted her, she came up nearly dead astern at a distance of about 5,000 yards, and the Captain opened fire with his big gun—a 4·1-inch, I think. Our organisation for meeting this situation and decoying him now came into being. The Red Ensign was hoisted at the ensign staff and the 2½-pounder gun at once returned the fire, with orders that the shots must all go well "short," in order to encourage him closer. They also had frequent missfires and delays—in fact, their firing was to be a perfect disgrace to any naval gunner. As a matter of fact, the crew consisted of three very fine men—Leading Seaman Cooper, Seaman Williams, V.C., and Wireless Operator Statham. They had a difficult job, and were fully exposed to the enemy shell fire, without any cover, and not only did they carry out their job to perfection, but appeared to enjoy the humour of it.

The ship herself was pretending to try to escape; in reality we reduced speed by 1 knot, which also reduced the range, but, in order to avoid any detection of our reduced speed, we made as much

smoke as we could and only made an occasional zigzag.

As it happened, we were steering head to sea, which was not advantageous to the submarine, and had we really wished to escape I think we could have done so. In addition to our smoke and bad shooting, we attempted to assure him of our bona fides by making fake wireless signals *en clair*. There was just a chance he had his aerial rigged, and would take them in; we therefore made such signals as "S.O.S.," "Submarine chasing and shelling me," "Submarine overtaking me," "Help, come quickly." None of these signals had any position attached to them, so that no one could interfere with us; but of course they were a source of annoyance to the Lizard and other stations, who kept asking, "What is your position?" to which we gave no reply, being in too much of a "panic."

Whilst all this was going on, the men who usually lounged about took such cover from the shelling as they could. This would be the ordinary procedure of a tramp, and in any case the submarine was too far off to see what was happening on board. As a matter of fact, the precaution was unnecessary, as at this period, although the shelling was very persistent and he must have fired a lot of rounds, yet he never hit us. Nearly all his shots fell just over the bow—in fact, we were steaming into them all the time. Of course, from where the submarine

was, he would not see the splashes, and was probably under the impression he was hitting us.

At 12.10, after having shelled us for half an hour and apparently being satisfied that our after-gun wasn't much good, he ceased firing and steamed towards us at apparently full speed. Whilst closing us he didn't fire, as I presume he was unable to do so owing to the sea. At 12.25 he turned broadside on and reopened fire. He was now about 1,000 yards off, and I passed the word along to stand by to abandon ship—but I had to wait for the psychological moment before playing this next card. I didn't want to get hit, but I didn't want to make the next move precipitately. His shooting was getting more accurate, as he was now slightly on our quarter and could see his own splashes, so would know where most of his shots were falling, and they were now going all around us.

This part of the action went on for a quarter of an hour, when at 12.40 the moment arrived for the next move. A shot fell a foot or so off the ship's side abreast the engine-room. I instantly turned steam on from the bridge and enveloped the centre part of the ship in steam to pretend we had been hit in the engine- and boiler-rooms. At the same moment the ship was stopped, steam blown off, and "Abandon ship" was ordered. The panic party got busy and the usual pandemonium reigned. The 2½-pounder also ceased fire, and was abandoned. At the last moment an *en*

clair signal of "Am abandoning ship" was also made.

At the time of ordering "Abandon ship," I put the helm to starboard, which brought our port beam towards the submarine. It would be natural for a ship to fall off her course on stopping, and also I wanted him to see the panic party. A boat on his side was let down end up and all the usual procedure took place.

As soon as we stopped he naturally closed rapidly, but fired three more shells before ceasing fire. Probably he didn't realise at once we had stopped. Be that as it may, the three shells were unlucky for us: the first one of this three hit the poop and a big explosion took place. I thought at first by the noise of the explosion that the magazine had blown up, in which case the game would be up. I couldn't see at the time what exactly had happened owing to the steam, nor did I realise that the explosion was a comparatively trivial thing compared with what was to follow, so I made a wireless signal to "men-of-war" that the magazine had blown up and I required assistance. I did not know how far off the nearest of H.M. ships was, as we were off the area of the ordinary patrols, but I thought it would be about 50 miles away. I had always to keep in mind that although we didn't want ships in sight whilst our job was in hand, as their presence would cause the submarine to submerge, yet assistance was desirable as quickly as possible after an action: in

the first place to save the ship, if the action had been successful ; and in the event of an unsuccessful one or your " hand being called "—as appeared the case now—assistance was required to save the crew. When once the submarine realised what he was up against, he could torpedo the ship till it sank—as he did on several occasions—and lives would be unnecessarily lost or the crew taken prisoners.

A few minutes later, when the steam cleared, I could see the poop was still intact and our secret not disclosed. I at once made another signal to all H.M. ships to " Keep away for the present." This was essential, as by chance a battleship escorted by destroyers happened to be homeward bound from the Mediterranean, and had answered my first call, saying she was sending a destroyer. This was the last thing we wanted, now we were still more or less intact. The destroyer therefore (unknown to us at the time) remained out of sight about 15 miles away and diverted all shipping.

As it turned out afterwards, this first explosion was probably only one depth charge—which severely wounded Statham of the 2½-pounder gun's crew and also Seaman Morrison, D.S.M., R.N.R., who was in charge of the depth charges. This latter man was blown through the poop doors, and was found by one of the 2½-pounder gun's crew, who was on his way to join the " abandon ship " party. Morrison was trying to stagger back to his post, although badly wounded, because, as he said, " I

am in charge of the depth charges and must get back to them."

This explosion also blew Bonner out of his hawser reel, but with great presence of mind he crawled into the hatch with the 4-inch gun's crew. The next two shells also landed in the poop and set it on fire. I have already described the contents of the poop, and I would sooner have had any other part of the ship on fire than that. The prospects did not look particularly hopeful, though it was now that I sent my signal to keep away, as there was still a chance. The panic party had in the meantime been busy and the boats were just leaving the ship.

The submarine having ceased fire was now steering towards the ship to pass under our stern, but black smoke was pouring out of the poop and going straight over the submarine. I was now faced with a great decision to make—the poop was on fire, the 4-inch gun and its crew were on the poop, in fact on the magazine. I knew for a certainty that the poop would blow up, and with it the gun's crew. I couldn't order the crew to leave the gun, as the ship was " abandoned " and the boats away. On the other hand, the submarine, although just visible, was hardly so, and each second was getting more obscured by the smoke. If I opened fire I would save the men on the poop, but would we get the submarine? I doubted it: the target was a too hazy one even to me, and I had the best view. If I waited a bit he

would soon be through the smoke and on our weather side, and as he was coming along to pass close to us, this would be the opportunity to get him—not ideal, because when he ceased fire his gun's crew had returned inside the conning tower and the lid was shut ; but it would be a reasonable chance and the best we would now be likely to get, for, as soon as the poop blew up, I knew our identity would be disclosed.

To cold-bloodedly leave the gun's crew to their fate seemed awful, and the names of each of them flashed through my mind, but our duty was to sink the submarine. By losing a few men we might save thousands not only of lives but of ships and tons of the nation's requirements.

I decided to wait—a decision I could not have come to had I not had the most implicit confidence in Bonner and his gun's crew : them in particular, but the whole crew left on board in general—as we all knew what the poop contained in the way of explosives, and perhaps the whole ship would be blown up.

At 12.58 the submarine was passing our stern, and it was now only a matter of seconds before he would be clear on the weather side and within 400 yards of my three 12-pounder guns (leaving out the 4-inch). At this instant a terrific explosion took place and the whole ship shivered. The stern of the ship was blown out, the 4-inch gun and crew complete were blown into the air, and now the

railway trucks proved of value in a way I had never foreseen. All the gun's crew except one landed on the railway trucks, and the canvas and wood broke their fall before they reached the iron deck, with the result that although they were all damaged, none of them was killed. The odd man landed in the water, and was eventually picked up by the panic party none the worse. The gun itself landed on the well-deck and the shells which had been round the gun all over the ship, one of them by the bridge, but luckily none of them exploded. The explosion was the worst of luck. Had it delayed a few seconds, I might have had a different tale to write; but there it was, and the immediate matter in hand was to face it.

As soon as the explosion took place, the submarine did a crash dive, but not before a couple of shots had been fired at her, one of which may possibly have been a hit. The explosion had started the open fire gongs, and the gun on the boat-deck, which was the only one that would bear, got in a couple of rounds. From the bridge the bow of the submarine crossing the stern was the only thing visible of her at the time of the explosion, but the whole of her was just visible as she dived, and I could see that the shots had not done any serious—if any—damage.

The White Ensign was now flying at the mast-head. The Red Ensign could be seen dangling aft in the wreckage of the poop and the gun ports were down—in fact, we were a man-of-war in all respects.

And, without going into the ethics of submarine warfare, there was no doubt that the submarine was in all respects entitled to sink us or kill us as best she could. But no further signal for help was sent, as we still had another card left up our sleeve, and now was the time to "Q abandon ship." He knew what we were and I knew that he would torpedo us.

In the meantime, whilst waiting to be torpedoed, there was time for several things to be done. Under the charge of Surgeon Probationer Fowler, an excellent young Scottish surgeon, I had the wounded removed to the saloon and cabins, so as to be out of the way for the next round, and the hoses were rigged and turned on the poop. From such examination as could be made it was apparent that only the depth charges had exploded and the magazines were still intact. We could not get very near, as the whole place was in flames and the deck red-hot, but we could see that the after-part of the deck had been turned right back, like a piece of paper might have been, and we could also see one side of the magazine. Probably the second explosion had been the remaining three depth charges—about 900 lb. of T.N.T. and the ready ammunition beside the 4-inch and 2½-pounder guns.

Whilst the wounded were being removed and the hoses rigged, there was time to consider if there was any more that could be done, other than what we intended, to decoy our enemy, who I

guessed would be extra wary. Of course, we could have got the men on board, steamed off, and got away to try again at a more favourable time after refit. This might have been the wiser course, but I hardly gave it more than a second's thought—it savoured of running away.

The only alternative was to wait the inevitable torpedo and have another attempt to decoy him to the surface again. It was a sporting chance, with the odds heavily against us.

To wait on board a ship, with engines stopped and a fire raging round the big magazine, for a torpedo to be fired at you was certainly asking for trouble, but there was a certain amount of humour about it, and several of us had small bets as to where it would hit.

We didn't have very long to wait, as at 1.20, just over twenty minutes since the submarine had submerged, a torpedo was seen approaching from the starboard side, fired at a range of about 1,000 yards. We watched its approach, and as this was the fifth time we had watched the same thing (there were only one or two men on board who hadn't been torpedoed before) it left us rather cold. It hit us with a crash, just abaft the engine-room: the hatches and railway trucks were blown about the place, and the bulkhead was started between the hold and the engine-room.

I now ordered "Q abandon ship," and an additional party of men started a new panic party.

The boat that had been left end up was now lowered and filled ; the original panic party came back and picked up a few more men, and a raft consisting of barrels and spars was launched. This latter, we thought, would increase the realism of it being a final " abandon ship." Remaining on board were two 12-pounder guns' crews, two men at the torpedo tubes, four of us on the bridge, the Chief and one stoker and the nine wounded with the doctor—thirty-four all told, of whom twenty-three only were fit for fighting.

We were now reduced to only two guns. The crews that I kept back were the one on the forecastle under Nisbet, which had a good arc of fire, and the " cabin " gun's crew under Frame, as this crew, without being seen, could man either the starboard or port gun. The White Ensign was already flying, so the signalman had joined in the " Q abandon ship " party, and I kept Hereford on the bridge with me, at the opposite end to myself, as I thought that the torpedoes might be required and either he or I could fire them. Andrews was in the wireless-room, Jack Orr was lying at the wheel—not that he could have steered if we had wanted to—but he was not cut out for an action station of any sort except at the wheel. Nunn was at his " exchange," by which he could communicate to the other parts of the ship and I with him either by shouting or voice-pipe.

At 1.40 p.m. the periscope of the submarine was

sighted on the starboard bow, and for nearly an hour she steamed round and round the ship, with an occasional turn towards the boats, which were off the port side. It gave me a much-needed opportunity of borrowing a box of matches from Hereford, as my pipe had gone out and I had run out of them. The dinghy had originally had the raft in tow, but was drifting a long way away from the larger lifeboats, and as would be quite natural, the men on the raft were taken off and crowded into the other boats, the raft being left adrift. The submarine appeared to treat this raft with some suspicion and examine it—perhaps they thought it was a decoy mine! One of the boats that at one time had been fairly close to the weather quarter had an unexpected shower of condensed-milk tins on it, one of the explosions having blown them through the stern.

Whilst the submarine was circling round the ship, the question, of course, came to my mind of trying to torpedo her. She frequently offered a good target, but I had no great faith in my torpedoes, and I looked on them as a last resort and preferred to wait a chance of gunfire. I thought that sooner or later she would be sure to come up.

While this long-drawn-out and very trying inspection was going on, the submarine sometimes coming a few yards off the ship, the fire on the poop was still raging and the magazine and shells were exploding in penny numbers; each box of cordite

or shell exploded when it got to the right temperature and we went through an incessant banging of small explosions. The water which was entering the ship was also gaining, and slowly but surely flooding the ship. Steam in the boilers was dying out, as the ship being abandoned it would have been unrealistic to be seen stoking up through the funnel. We thus reduced any chance of escape.

Thus we waited till at 2.30 the submarine came to the surface, dead astern of us at a few hundred yards' distance. The 4-inch gun had gone, the 12-pounder gun on the boat-deck was masked by the mainmast, and no other gun would bear. It flashed through my mind to man the boat-deck gun and shoot away the mainmast, but I realised the time taken would allow the Captain time to dive. There was nothing to be done but wait. From his position right astern he opened fire with his big gun almost as soon as he broke surface, and shelled us for twenty minutes—a most unpleasant experience. From my look-out I could see his gun's crew go through all the motions of loading the gun, could see it fire, and then one waited to see where the shell would explode, and he was apparently firing high explosive. A Maxim was also firing at the boats and several of the shots fell very close to them. They pulled away, but Truscott, who had gone in charge of the dinghy with the " Q abandon ship " party, kept as close as he could to the ship, as he

told me afterwards things looked ugly and he was going to save us if he could.

The first shell of all burst on the bridge, smashed my bathroom, and a large splinter went through the deck into the saloon, where the wounded were already having all the discomfort they could. This shell also removed Orr's cap as he was lying at the wheel, so I said to him, "Things are getting pretty warm." "Yes, sir," he replied; "I think I will change end for end," an expression used when a rope in a purchase is unrove and rove the other way, and so he turned right round and an extraordinary thing happened. A large splinter from the next shell passed between his legs—in other words, if he hadn't changed end for end he would have got it in the head and been killed.

A second shell burst on the bridge and removed the bulkhead which supported Nunn's voice-pipes, leaving them, however, standing, but he remained quite calm and continued making notes and attending to the voice-pipes.

It was now that our armoured ends of the bridge were of service, as but for them both Hereford and I would have been killed, for the plates were covered with splinters; and, as it was, Hereford got an unlucky one in his head, but happily only a small one.

During this short but heavy bombardment, though it was surprising what comparatively little material damage he did at close range, a message

came up from the forecastle gun to say one of the men had requested to take his boots off. This struck me as an extraordinary request, and I asked the reason why. The reply was the man thought the end had really come, and he would sooner die with his boots off.

The shelling only lasted twenty minutes. It was extremely unpleasant, but the men stood the strain and no one moved. I reminded them through the voice-pipe that the ship had the honour of the Victoria Cross to maintain. I don't think we could have stuck it much longer, as it appeared that she would shell us till we were reduced to a floating furnace, or else to surrender, which none of us thought of.

At 2.50 she ceased fire and submerged. Just before this she was just within the bearing of one of my 12-pounders, and I was hoping she would come on a better bearing, but it was not to be.

I thought that now the time had come for us to use our torpedoes if he again came in range, as he apparently had no intention of running the slightest risk at all, and so when he passed the ship again with only periscope showing at 2.55 at a distance of about 150 yards, I personally fired the port torpedo at him, but judging from the track of the torpedo it must have passed over him. Anyhow, he didn't see it, and circled round our bow. He passed so close on this occasion that I thought he must be damaged and was going to hit us—in fact,

the foremost gun's crew reported he had, but in reality he hadn't.

I ordered Hereford to fire the starboard torpedo when he passed down that side. Eight minutes later this torpedo either failed to explode or grazed over the top, as we could distinctly hear it make contact. The submarine heard it, too, and promptly submerged.

The game was now nearly up and I signalled for assistance. I thought that she would simply torpedo us now till we sank, but I hurriedly arranged that. pending the arrival of assistance, we would not give in, but have a third " abandon ship," and that when torpedoed all the men remaining were to abandon ship except one gun's crew.

In the meantime we were able to get up out of our uncomfortable position and " admire the scenery." The men in the boats were surprised to see us, especially on the bridge, as they thought we must all be done for, and they cheered with joy. One man, when he saw me, shouted out in a loud voice, " My oath, there's the blooming skipper still alive, Wouldn't they Huns give ninepence an inch for him ? " I was honoured to think my skin was so valuable !

The next torpedo never came. I have learnt since that the submarine had none left, nor could he attack us again with gunfire, as, very unexpectedly, about half an hour after the submarine submerged, the U.S.S. *Noma*, an American yacht, which knew

H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN" SHOWING SPLINTERS ON BRIDGE AFTER BEING SHELLED. REAR-ADMIRAL GORDON CAMPBELL IS SEEN WITH PIPE IN MOUTH AND LIEUTENANT HEREFORD WITH BACK TURNED. THE SPLINTERS ON LOWER BRIDGE DECK ARE AGAINST THE "ARMOUR."

nothing about us, hove in sight. She sighted and fired at the periscope without success. At 4 p.m. the *Noma* was close alongside. The action, which had lasted for nearly five hours, was now at an end. It had been a fair and square fight and I had lost, but I had the great consolation of knowing that if any mistake was made, if anything was done that ought not to have been done, if anything was left undone that ought to have been done, then the only possible person to blame could be myself. My ship had been perfectly fitted out, and as for my crew, words can't say what I think—not a man failed, not a man could have done more.

SUBMARINE SHELLING AT LONG RANGE.

CHAPTER XV

THE END OF THE " DUNRAVEN "

We had lost our quarry, and every effort had now to be made to save the ship. H.M. destroyers *Attack* and *Christopher* arrived immediately after the *Noma*.

The boats were recalled to the ship, but our luck seemed to be thoroughly out, as one boat was bumped by a destroyer and two men went into the " ditch," but were safely got out. In addition to this, I found that the strain on the crew who had remained on board lying concealed during practically five hours' more or less gruel was greater even than I expected ; two of them went temporarily off their heads, and with difficulty we had to restrain them from jumping overboard, their only object in life being to dive overboard and " get at him." It was very pathetic, but showed the spirit underlying them all.

The poop had been completely gutted ; all the depth charges and contents of the magazines and shell-rooms had exploded. A little smouldering was still going on, and this was put out by the hoses. The last thing to explode was a small box of tubes : I couldn't help laughing, as it seemed so

stupid, after all the explosives we had had, to see a box of tubes explode like a squib.

After giving the necessary orders to get ready for towing, and telling the Chief to see if he could raise steam again, I went to the saloon to see the wounded. Again it is hard to put anything into words: one man was sipping blood to quench his thirst, but all were cheerful, and their only question was, "Have we got him, sir?" When, to my everlasting regret, I had to tell them I hadn't, they said, "We've done our bit," and if ever men had, they had.

The Medical Officers of the *Noma* and *Christopher* came over and helped Fowler to attend to them. The two most dangerous cases, which required immediate operations, Morrison and Martindale, were transferred to the *Noma*, and taken with all despatch to Brest. I was very grateful for the great kindness these two men received from the Americans. Unfortunately, Morrison succumbed to his wounds; like so many others in the Great War, he died the death of a brave man. I have always thought that we were extraordinarily lucky in the little loss of life we had, because we were always asking for trouble.

After the wounded had been transferred, the *Christopher*, under Lieutenant-Commander Peters, D.S.O., D.S.C., started to take us in tow. Destroyers are always ready for anything, and it didn't take long for the *Christopher* to have everything ready. We, on the other hand, had a great deal to do, putting the fire out, hoisting boats, and getting

the cables ready on the forecastle. The crew had been through a severe strain, and I could see some of them were nearly done, but they all worked cheerfully, which was half the battle. Some were physically incapable of doing a great deal. It must be remembered that it was getting on for six o'clock and there had been no meal since breakfast—nor was much available now.

I had reported briefly by wireless to our C.-in-C. what had happened, and, with his usual understanding and realisation of the situation, he sent us a cheering message. "Hearty congratulations on your brave fight. Hope ship will be saved. Very well done." This message inspired us all to further efforts.

By 6.45 the *Christopher* had us in tow and course was shaped for Plymouth. Towing was very difficult. The Chief had reported that he was unable to raise steam; the engine- and boiler-rooms already had several feet of water in them and it was gaining faster than we could pump it out. The result was we were unable to steer; but apart from having no steam, the rudder had either gone or was useless as far as we could ascertain.

A nasty sea was also running and, very slowly but very surely, the stern went lower and the water worked its way forward. Most of the crew had a night's rest, as there was little to be done. But owing to two of the wireless operators being seriously wounded—Statham as a member of the 2½-pounder

H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN" IN TOW OF THE DESTROYER "CHRISTOPHER."

and Fletcher at the 4-inch gun, rather unusual "action stations" for wireless ratings—Andrews, the other operator, who had been locked up in the wireless-room all the action, had now to remain permanently on duty. When daylight came we still had a prospect of getting the ship in; the stern was under water, and we were only making a knot or two, but there was no immediate danger of sinking. During the day the weather got worse and seas began to break over us from astern, and so before dark I decided to transfer some of the crew to the trawler *Foss*, which had arrived and was escorting us. So at 6 p.m. sixty odd men were transferred and I kept twenty on board. All the remaining wounded were sent over except Bonner. He made a special request to be allowed to stay, and although his head was all in bandages, I knew what he was feeling and allowed him to stay. He was unfit for duty, but we gave him a chair on the bridge and his cheery disposition bucked us all up. We had practically nothing to eat at all during this period, as all the store-rooms had been in the poop and everything had of course gone.

At 9 p.m. two tugs, the *Sun II* and *Atlanta*, arrived, and the tow was transferred to them from *Christopher*. Whilst this operation was taking place, quite large seas were breaking over the ship, and it didn't look now as if she could last much longer. The engine- and boiler-rooms were full, in fact nearly two-thirds of the ship was under water.

At about 1.30 a.m. I felt the ship was going and ordered all the crew—now twenty—to fall in on the well-deck forward. By prearranged signal I ordered the tugs to cast off the tow and the *Christopher*, who was now escorting us, to close. In due course Hereford came to the bridge and reported the crew fallen in ; he did it in just as calm a manner as if he had been on parade with his beloved King's Royal Rifles. With him I went forward, and the ship had now gone so far that we had to wade through water to get forward at all. I found the men fallen in, in deadly silence ; it was a pitch-dark night and blowing very fresh. I now witnessed a sight, by no means uncommon in the annals of the chivalry of the sea, but one which will long live in my memory.

The *Christopher* had closed and was sending her whaler—an open boat with four or five oars. I realised that with the heavy sea running it would be unwise to put more than four men into her, and I also realised that the boat wouldn't do more than one trip, so I gave the order " Four men to get into the boat only." Not a man moved : they all knew there would only be one trip, and no one wanted to go before the other. I therefore had to name four to go. The water was now rising round us, and I ordered the remainder to fall in on the fore-castle head. Still complete silence was maintained, except for the wind and sea.

The *Christopher*, realising the situation, bumped

his bow against ours, which was gradually getting higher out of the water as the ship went end up. This was a most delicate operation and one requiring great skill and careful handling, as a destroyer's bows are very thin. She would bump alongside and then fall off with the sea : each time she bumped one man would jump, in the darkness, from our deck to hers, but no man jumped till he had received my personal order. Discipline was maintained to the end.

By the time I got to the bridge of the destroyer the *Dunraven* had gone, sinking with her colours flying. As a sort of last struggle she lay with a few feet of her stem sticking out of the water. The *Christopher* fired a few rounds without effect, and I then suggested a depth charge. This the *Christopher* dropped, and at 3.17 a.m. the *Dunraven* disappeared beneath the waves.

As I put in my report : " I—we—deeply regret the loss of one of H.M. ships, and still more the escape of the enemy."

The *Christopher* took us to Plymouth, where the *Foss* with the remainder of my crew was already bound. Of course, there was not a ghost of a chance of any salvage, the ship having sunk in some sixty fathoms. The only optimist was the Post-master-General Department, for when I wrote asking for the replacement of my lost War Savings certificates, stating how they had been lost, I received a reply that I must wait six months in

case they were recovered! We had, of course, lost everything, and I was dumped ashore next morning in all I possessed, a jersey and trousers with a whistle and binoculars round my neck. Jack Orr was particularly upset about my brand-new monkey-jacket—my first Captain one. He had, unknown to me, carefully put it away in the dinghy, which was hoisted near the bridge. This he had done when we were first taken in tow, as he reckoned the ship wouldn't see port, and he decided that at all costs the monkey-jacket must be saved. Unluckily, when the ship went down so rapidly at the end, the dinghy was, like the other boats, washed away before it could be used, and Orr's well-intentioned action and my monkey-jacket with it.

As soon as we arrived at Plymouth, my first thoughts were to proceed to Queenstown to report to Admiral Bayly. I, as soon as possible, went to an outfitter for a suit of uniform to go over in. He would take some time to make a monkey-jacket, but I espied a brand-new monkey-jacket belonging to a Paymaster-Commander; it fitted me except that I couldn't button it up. Anyhow, I had the stripes altered and took it. I have never discovered who the Paymaster-Commander was, but should he read these lines I hope he will accept my apologies for any inconvenience he suffered and a copy of this book.

I went to Queenstown without telling anyone where I was going, except the C.-in-C., Plymouth.

H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN," SHOWING THE AFTER-PART OF THE SHIP, AFTER BEING TORPEDOED AND THE MAGAZINE EXPLODED. THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN FROM THE BOAT DECK, THE CREW BEING STILL ON BOARD.

I went before I had " collected " all my crew, which at the moment were sprinkled between Hospital, Barracks, *Foss*, and *Christopher*.

I found out afterwards that my sudden disappearance caused quite a consternation and alarmist reports got about. Anyhow, they soon found out where I had gone, and they sent me a telegram referred to later.

I felt very uncomfortable arriving at Queenstown with a monkey-jacket on that I couldn't button up, but the Admiral soon put me at my ease by walking through Queenstown with me with his undone also—regardless of what people said or thought.

Before going to Queenstown I had been to see the men in hospital at Plymouth. They all said the same thing : " We shall be all right again by the time you have fitted out a new ship." This came from one of them just before he was going to have a dangerous operation, which it was doubtful he would survive. Incidentally, he was one of the men who had had his bath before the action, and he has told me since that the last he remembers before becoming unconscious was hearing the nurse say, " He's nice and clean "—his own thoughts being " Coming events."

Imagine, then, my feelings when Admiral Bayly had me in his office and told me it had been decided that I was not to go on in this sort of job any more. I begged to be allowed to go on. Not only was I keen on the job myself, but I felt I should be letting

my crew down if I didn't. As I was pleading my case, a telegram was brought in for me, which read, " Crew of *Dunraven* all volunteer for further service under your command." I showed this to the Admiral, and as far as naval discipline permitted told him he couldn't stop me going on ; but it was of no avail, and although I almost felt like striking him, I knew I was in the presence of the finest C.-in-C. I have ever served under and a man I had the greatest respect and affection for, and I knew in my inner heart that his decision must be right, and so my service in mystery ships was brought to a close. But I had the privilege of going on with Admiral Bayly as his Flag Captain.

The official report had to be seen to. Nunn kept worrying me to get on with it, and I had to do it before I went to Queenstown, but my feelings at the time were that as the submarine had escaped and our ship sunk, what was the use of hurrying about it ? I mention this because I often think that, especially nowadays, with rapid communications of wireless, etc., the powers that be are often so impatient to get reports that they are sometimes sent without full knowledge of the facts and possibly before the person writing the reports is in the mood to do so. I know in this case that although, as on previous occasions, I had all the times of events at hand from Nunn, in spite of the fact that his writing-platform had been shot away, yet I did not put in so many details as I should have done had I been

able to wait a day or two—such details as the final abandoning of the ship.

What was I to say about my crew this time? And what of the after-gun's crew? They had given every ounce in them—which no orders could have produced—only intense discipline and loyalty. A typical example of it was immediately after the big explosion, when Bonner, who had landed on the railway trucks, crawled on to the bridge, in spite of being badly wounded in his head and burnt on his hands, and said to me, "I am sorry, sir, for leaving my gun without orders. I think I must have been blown up." He then asked who we were in action with. When I replied "A submarine," he said, "Is that all? I thought it was at least a battle-cruiser." He didn't remember this incident afterwards, but just like Smith, when he found there was something wrong he couldn't account for, he came to report at once. His sense of duty and loyalty must have been deeply engrained in his subconscious mind.

I had discovered on investigation that, unknown to me, at the time of the first big explosion the communication between the bridge and 4-inch gun's crew had been broken. They had tried to get through and report the situation, but, on finding they were out of reach with me, Bonner and his gallant crew made the same decision as I had made, that they must wait where they were, as had they moved they would have spoilt the show, since

the ship had already been abandoned and no one was supposed to be on board. This act of theirs, then, was entirely on their own ; they had had no prompting from me and no words of encouragement. Perhaps it will show the complete confidence I had in my crew and I think they had in me.

They sat on the deck when it was getting red-hot, and knowing the magazines were underneath, one young fellow—I think it was Martindale—tore up his shirt to stuff up their mouths to keep the fumes out ; others lifted the " ready-use " boxes of cordite off the deck on to their knees to delay them exploding. They knew all the time they must be blown up, and they also knew that if they moved they might spoil the show. I could only say that I thought, " Surely such bravery is hard to equal ! "

They went through the greatest ordeal, but the others on board had also a most trying time. Those who read can imagine better than I can write what the strain was. A ship alone in the Bay of Biscay, on fire, torpedoed, depth charges exploded, and magazines going off at odd intervals, and still the men remaining concealed at their posts. I at least could see more or less what was going on, but they couldn't. I said in my report that " the tactics I carried out were only possible through the utmost confidence I had in my ship and my crew," and I summed up the feelings of us all when I said, " We did our best not only to destroy the enemy and then

save the ship, but also to show ourselves worthy of the Victoria Cross the King recently bestowed on the ship."

The German account of this action does not differ materially from my own. Apparently the submarine did not suspect us in any way until the big explosion took place—up till then he thought he had really hit us in the engine-room and that the "steam" was the result. He apparently didn't see our first "abandon ship," perhaps owing to the steam or smoke, but he saw the second and counted fifty-seven men, which was about right. He claimed to have scored ten hits in his close-range bombardment, and when going round the ship afterwards to see if any life was aboard saw none.

Apparently he heard the second torpedo pass close to his periscope, but had none left himself for a further attack. I am sorry that Salzwedel, the Commander of the submarine, was killed later in another submarine, and, as it happens, our submarine U.C.71 also came to grief.

The German account pays tribute to the endurance of the crew of the *Dunraven*, and admits that, in spite of the great care of the submarine Commander, he was also saved by its greater luck —though even after he knew what we were we had a chance with our torpedoes, which he apparently didn't know about.

It would have been of great interest to be

able to meet Commander Salzwedel and compare notes, as it was a good scrap, and there would have been many points of interest.

The Admiralty conveyed to us their Lordships' admiration of the magnificent discipline and gallantry displayed in this fine action, and although the regulation didn't admit of the grant of the full £1,000 being made, the ship was awarded the special grant of £300. Admiral Sims, of the U.S. Navy, sent me a letter which we much appreciated, coming from a great Allied Commander. In it he said :

" I have had the benefit of reading some of the reports of your previous exploits, but in my opinion this fight of the *Dunraven's* is the finest of them all as a military action and the most deserving of complete success. It is purely incidental that the submarine escaped : that was simply due to an unfortunate piece of bad luck. The engagement, judged as a skilful fight, and not measured solely by its material results, seems to me to have been perfectly successful. . . . According to my idea of such matters, the standard of conduct set by you and your crew is worth infinitely more than the destruction of a submarine. Long after we are dust and ashes, the story of this fight will be an invaluable inspiration to British and American naval officers and men—a demonstration of the extraordinary degree to which the patriotism, loyalty, personal devotion, and bravery of a crew may be inspired.

I know nothing finer in naval history than the conduct of the after-gun crew or, indeed, of the entire crew of the *Dunraven*. . . . I beg you to believe that I and the officers under my command are deeply sensible of the value of the demonstration that there is no limit to the sacrifice that the men of your Navy are willing to make for the great cause."

The First Lord of the Admiralty—Sir Eric Geddes—sent for me on leaving the Q-ship trade and handed me a hand-signed letter, which he had very kindly had photographed to enable a copy to be given to each member of the crew. It read :

"DEAR CAPTAIN CAMPBELL,

"It is with very great pleasure that I convey to you, by the direction of the War Cabinet, an expression of their high appreciation of the gallantry, skill, and devotion to duty which have been displayed through many months of arduous service by yourself and the officers and men of His Majesty's ship under your command.

"In conveying to you this message of the War Cabinet, which expresses the high esteem with which the conduct of your officers and men is regarded by His Majesty's Government, I wish to add on behalf of the Board of Admiralty that they warmly endorse this commendation.

" Will you please convey this message to all ranks and ratings under your command ?

" Yours very truly,

(Signed) " ERIC GEDDES."

The greatest honour came, as usual, at the hands of H.M. the King ; Lieutenant Bonner was awarded the Victoria Cross, and the Victoria Cross was also awarded to the after-gun's crew under Article 13 of the Statutes of the Victoria Cross. Petty Officer Pitcher, the captain of the gun, was selected to receive it, and the remainder of the crew were awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal. A posthumous C.G.M. was also awarded to Seaman Morrison, and in addition to special awards for this action, all the men who had served throughout since October 1915 and had not been previously decorated received the D.S.M. These awards and others appear at the end of this chapter, and H.M. the King, in making them, stated that " greater bravery than was shown by all officers and men on this occasion can hardly be conceived."

On August 24th we paid off. On the last Sunday of our " brief commission " we attended the Parade Service at the church of the Naval Barracks, Devonport, and with the consent of the Commodore—now Vice-Admiral Corbett, C.B.—our ensign, which we had had in our three ships, was carried up the aisle by Truscott, and after being dedicated was deposited in the church, being hoisted by him

REAR-ADMIRAL GORDON CAMPBELL AND CREW OF H.M.S. "DUNRAVEN" ON PAYING OFF. LIEUTENANT BONNER IS ON HIS RIGHT AND LIEUTENANT LOVELESS ON HIS LEFT.

on a specially erected staff, in the presence of us all.

Many who read this will know what it means to say good-bye to a crew who have gone through tight corners with you. In a quiet corner of the Barracks I took leave of my very gallant crew. No applause, no cheers, when men have faced death together: this sort of thing is out of place. My personal feelings I leave to imagination. A finer crew no man has ever had the honour to command, but as I told the officers and men in the *Tiger*, the last ship I was privileged to command, that equally fine crews could always be found, based on loyalty, discipline, and self-sacrifice—the final and acid test being war.

List of Awards after Action with U.C.71

Victoria Cross

Lieutenant C. G. Bonner, D.S.C., R.N.R., wounded.
Petty Officer Ernest Pitcher, wounded.

Second Bar to the Distinguished Service Order

Captain Gordon Campbell, V.C., D.S.O., R.N.

Distinguished Service Order

Assistant-Paymaster R. A. Nunn, D.S.C., R.N.R.

Bar to Distinguished Service Cross

Lieutenant F. R. Hereford, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N.R., wounded.

Engineer-Sub-Lieutenant J. W. Grant, D.S.C., R.N.R.
Engineer-Lieutenant L. S. Loveless, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N.R.

Distinguished Service Cross

Warrant Telegraphist A. Andrews, D.S.M., R.N.R.
Surgeon Probationer A. C. Fowler, R.N.V.R.
Sub-Lieutenant W. H. Frame, R.N.R.

The Conspicuous Gallantry Medal
The After-Gun's Crew

A.B. Dennis Murphy, wounded.
A.B. Richard W. Shepherd.
Seaman William H. Bennison, R.N.R., wounded.
Seaman John S. Martindale, R.N.R., wounded.
Wireless Telegraph Operator Thos. E. Fletcher, R.N.R., wounded.
Seaman James Thompson, R.N.R.
Seaman A. S. Morrison, R.N.R., died of wounds.

Bar to Distinguished Service Medal

Seaman W. Williams, V.C., R.N.R.
Leading Seaman J. G. Orr, R.N.R.
Signalman C. W. Hurrell, R.N.V.R.

Distinguished Service Medal

Stoker John Cook, R.N.R.
Wireless Telegraph Operator William Statham, R.N.R., wounded.
Leading Seaman Edward Cooper.
Stoker William O'Leary, R.N.R.
Petty Officer Samuel Nance.
Seaman Benjamin Haynes, R.N.R.

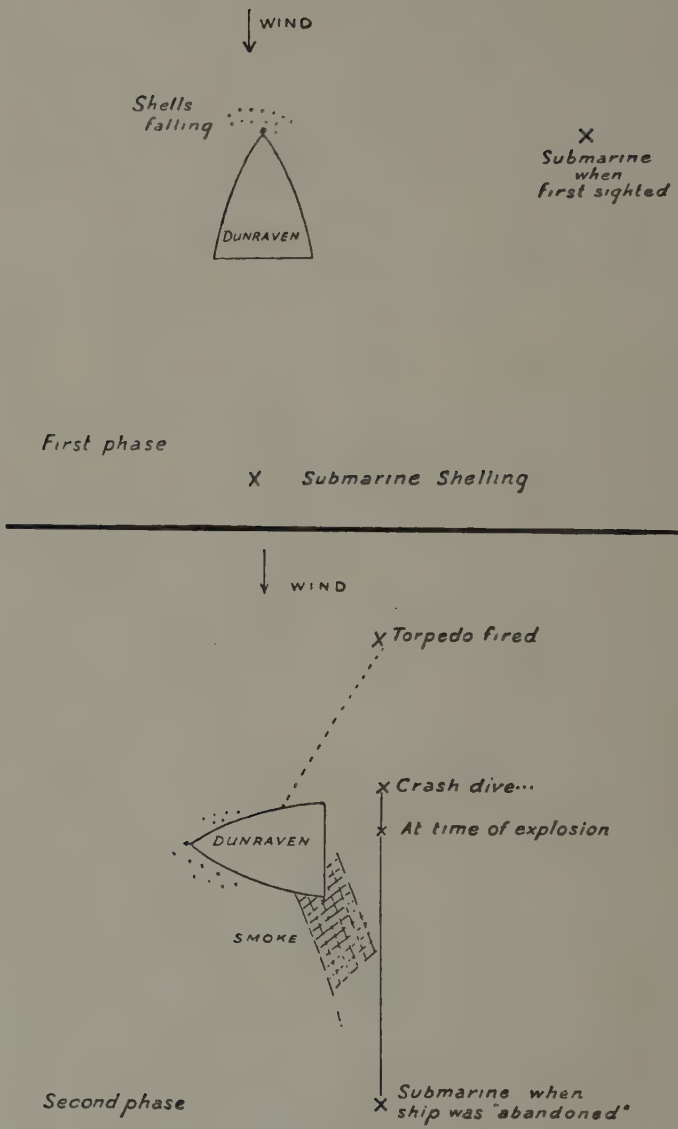
Stoker Robert Thomson, R.N.R.
Seaman David Dow, R.N.R.
Stoker Thomas Owen, R.N.R.
Officer Steward William R. Trickey.
Assistant Steward Arthur Pennal.
Seaman M. Connors, R.N.R.
Leading Seaman A. Kaye, R.N.R.
Seaman F. Dodd, R.N.R.
Stoker J. Colenso.
Stoker W. Crosbie.
Leading Stoker T. J. Davies, R.N.R.
Shipwright W. J. Smart.
Wireman S. A. Woodison.
Chief Steward A. E. Townshend.
Seaman P. Murphy, R.N.R.

Mentioned in Despatches

Lieutenant R. Nisbet, D.S.C., R.N.R.
A.B. F. Hawkins.
A.B. B. Harris.
A.B. W. Bethell.
A.B. J. Dineen.
A.B. H. Pearson.
A.B. J. Parker.
A.B. T. Lester.
Petty Officer G. Warren.
Leading Seaman E. A. Veale, D.S.M., R.N.R.
Seaman R. Pitt, R.N.R.
Seaman A. Davies, R.N.R.
Seaman G. Rees, R.N.R.
Chief Petty Officer G. H. Truscott, D.S.M.

Promoted to Warrant Officer

Chief Petty Officer G. H. Truscott, D.S.M.



H.M.S. DUNRAVEN'S ACTION

SUMMARY

It may appear to the reader of the foregoing chapters that an enormous amount of effort was used to destroy three submarines—in fact, in obtaining these three destructions, one merchant ship was beached, one put into dry-dock, and one sunk. It is only by comparison that a more correct estimate can be made. During the whole of the war only 200 German submarines were destroyed, and of these only 145 are known to be due to our own action, and include the more ordinary methods (though opportunities were few) of men-of-war ramming submarines, like the case of the *Birmingham*.

If we think of the enormous anti-submarine effort made—some 5,000 auxiliary craft employed, thousands of mines, guns, depth charges, and bombs, miles of nets, vast convoy systems, and many other contrivances and contraptions—to obtain this 145, then it may be realised that to encircle and destroy a submarine is not such an easy thing as may appear to the arm-chair critic.

Over 180 mystery ships of all sorts were fitted out, and the number of submarines to their credit was eleven. In addition to the three we obtained, two were credited to the *Penshurst*, under Captain F. H.

Grenfell, D.S.O., R.N., who, like us, had six encounters, and but for ill-luck would have obtained more successes, though this applies to most mystery ships. Again, it may appear that it took a long time even to sight a submarine ; this to a great extent is true, and the waiting and watching was a long and tedious affair. But on the other hand, if one eliminates the period when there were no submarines about, although at the time we could not know it, such as the winter of 1915–16, or the period up the Gulf, and further to eliminate the times in harbour refitting or fitting out, I have estimated that we sighted a submarine once in every ten days. In other words, when the submarines were there to be found, we, by attempting to keep in the danger-zone, could expect to get in touch every ten days ; this was due largely to having the right type of ship, and keeping the sea as long and as often as possible.

But one may ask whether all the large number of mystery ships fitted out were worth the lives, the money, and the ships to obtain the results.

It must be remembered that the actual destruction of the enemy was always the chief object in view, but the work of the mystery ships didn't end there ; in addition to the eleven destroyed, some sixty or so were probably damaged to a greater or smaller extent, with the result that they would be put *hors de combat* for some time, and the nerves of the men would probably be shaken. One can easily imagine that it must be a bit of a shock to be lying

off a harmless-looking tramp or sailing ship and suddenly find you are up against a man-of-war bristling with guns.

I have already explained in Chapter II the different methods of attack with their advantages and disadvantages. It must, therefore, be obvious that when a submarine began to realise that each time he came to the surface he was liable to attack in the early days from a mystery ship and in the latter days from the armed convoy, his safest method of attack (until the coming of the 5·9) would be the torpedo, a certain and deadly way of destroying a ship, but at a tremendous price of nerve, money and time.

Some people may argue that the mystery ship, by encouraging the submarine to use the torpedo instead of the gun, caused more harm than good, as the merchant ship attacked by a gun obviously had more chance of escape than if torpedoed. On the other hand, as has been explained, the submarine would have fewer chances of attack, and when he had run through his torpedoes would have to return by a very circuitous route round the British Isles back to Germany, unless he chanced the Straits of Dover, which at the latter part of the war anyhow was not becoming any more attractive. This again would reduce the number of submarines operating at any one time.

The whole subject is so full of pros and cons that it would take a long time to come to, even if one

could, an answer that would be agreeable to everyone, and this is probably the reason that the Admiralty were so slow in adopting the mystery ship as a definite policy.

The fact remains that they accounted for over 7 per cent. of the known destructions—this in spite of the fact that they were not used in large numbers till the secret was out. The effect on *morale* cannot be estimated, but it must have been very great.

One thing appears to me to stand out quite clearly, and that is if you have a new invention or surprise it is a mistake to use it until you are ready to do it on a big scale. The mystery ships were only used in penny numbers at first, and as it was obvious that sooner or later an unsuccessful action would take place, it would also be obvious that the secrecy of them was bound to leak out, making their chances of success increasingly difficult. This is borne out by looking at the dates of the sinking of enemy submarines by mystery ships.

No.	Date.	Name of Mystery Ship.
U.36	July 24th, 1915.	*Prince Charles.*
U.27	August 19th, 1915.	*Baralong.*
U.41	September 24th, 1915.	*Baralong.*
U.68	March 22nd, 1916.	*Farnborough.*
U.B.19	November 30th, 1916.	Q.7 (*Penshurst*).
U.B.37	January 14th, 1917	Q.7 (*Penshurst*).
U.83	February 17th, 1917.	Q.5 (*Farnborough*).
U.85	March 12th, 1917.	Q.19 (*Privet*).
U.C.29	June 7th, 1917	*Pargust.*
U.88	September 17th, 1917.	*Stonecrop.*
U.34	November 9th, 1918.	*Privet.*

The *Privet*, under Lieutenant-Commander Mathe-

son, R.N.R., had the distinction as Q.19 of sinking a submarine on March 12th ; and on her way back to harbour, badly holed and leaking, she sank outside Plymouth, was raised by Devonport Dockyard, refitted, and served again. As one would expect, in consequence, this last action was an extraordinarily smart bit of work, and I believe it was one of the very few night actions of a mystery ship, but it could hardly come under the heading of decoy, as it was more of a destroyer action, the submarine being discovered by a motor-launch, and the *Privet* coming in with seven depth charges in addition to gunfire.

Many deductions can always be made from statistics, and if you juggle them about enough you can generally come to any conclusion you want to.

But it is interesting to note that in 1915, when there were merely a handful of mystery ships, three successes were obtained. Supposing, instead of two or three mystery ships operating (I am not including the local and fishing decoy), there had been about thirty, as there were in 1917. It is not too much to suggest that the whole Submarine Menace might have been avoided. Had the Germans lost some 50 per cent. of their submarines in the first three months of their attack on shipping by some "unknown" method, it would have probably made all the difference.

In 1917 only five successes were obtained (two

of them by the novel method of being torpedoed first, and therefore a new secret), out of all proportion to 1915, when the mystery ships available were only about one-sixth of those in 1917. Towards the latter part of 1917 the mystery ship seems to have had its day. The introduction of the convoy system meant that nearly all ships sailed in convoys, and so a mystery ship cruising about in the Atlantic by itself would have, by the very fact of being alone, caused suspicion, unless able to convince the then wary enemy that it had fallen out of a convoy. This was an unlikely chance, and the only mystery vessels that stood any chance were of the coasting type, such as the *Stockforce*, which fought the last and well-known action under Lieutenant-Commander Auten, V.C., R.N.R. What were known as Q-sloops still had their use, as they had a good turn of speed, which enabled them to drop depth charges and so to some extent counteract the fact that they only looked like merchant ships at a distance ; also they were particularly useful in conjunction with the convoys.

The decline in the successes of mystery ships, compared with the increase of number used, can, I think, be summed up in : (1) the mystery having leaked out before the numbers were available ; (2) the introduction of convoy, which, so far as the important point of safety of shipping was concerned, more than counterbalanced the disappearance of the mystery ships ; (3) the introduction of camouflage,

which prevented a mystery ship frequently changing her appearance.

Another point of interest is that all the ships referred to on page 292 were (with the exception of the *Prince Charles*, a coastal steam collier of 400 tons) of the ordinary steamer type with tonnages varying from 800 to over 3,000 tons ; and to make comparison of the armament of the first and last : the *Prince Charles*, under Lieutenant Mark Wardlaw, D.S.O., had an armament of two 6-pounders and two 3-pounders ; the *Stonecrop*, under Commander M. Blackwood, was armed with one 4-inch gun, one 6-pounder, four submerged 18-inch torpedo tubes, and four 200-lb. bomb throwers. Even this would have been of doubtful use against the enemy's heavily armed cruiser submarines.

Will the mystery ship be used again ? Such a question cannot be answered ; but one thing is quite certain, that just as when one man fights another he will always try some feint to throw his opponent off as to his real intentions whilst he gets in his blow elsewhere, so in any war some form of deception or decoy will be used by sea, air, and land, and if anyone has ideas for such in future wars, he will be wise to keep his mystery to himself until it can be used with the maximum chance of success. Whatever new mysteries may be thought of, one thing is certain—the Empire can always produce the men required.

APPENDIX

EXTRACTS FROM SECOND SUPPLEMENT TO THE "LONDON GAZETTE"

Of Tuesday, 19th November, 1918

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Admiralty, 20th November, 1918.

WITH reference to announcements of the award of the Victoria Cross to naval officers and men for services in action with enemy submarines, the following are the accounts of the actions for which these awards were made :

(1) *Action of H.M.S. Q.5 on the 17th February, 1917.*

On the 17th February, 1917, H.M.S. Q.5, under the command of Commander Campbell, D.S.O., R.N., was struck by a torpedo abreast of No. 3 hold. Action stations were sounded and the "panic party" abandoned ship. The engineer officer reported that the engine-room was flooding, and was ordered to remain at his post as long as possible, which he and his staff, several of whom were severely wounded, most gallantly did. The submarine was observed on the starboard quarter 200 yards distant, watching the proceedings through his periscope. He ran past the ship on the starboard side so closely that the whole hull was visible beneath the surface, finally emerging about 300 yards on the port bow. The enemy came down the port side of the ship, and fire was withheld until all guns

could bear at point-blank range. The first shot beheaded the Captain of the submarine as he was climbing out of the conning tower, and the submarine finally sank with conning tower open and crew pouring out. One officer and one man were rescued on the surface and taken prisoner, after which the boats were recalled and all hands proceeded to do their utmost to keep the ship afloat. A wireless signal for assistance had been sent out when (but not until) the fate of the submarine was assured, and a destroyer and sloop arrived a couple of hours later and took Q.5 in tow. She was finally beached in safety the following evening.

The action may be regarded as the supreme test of naval discipline. The chief engineer and engine-room watch remained at their posts to keep the dynamo working until driven out by the water, then remained concealed on top of the cylinders. The guns' crews had to remain concealed in their gun-houses for nearly half an hour, while the ship slowly sank lower in the water.

(The award of the Victoria Cross to Commander Gordon Campbell, D.S.O., R.N., was announced in the *London Gazette* No. 30029, dated the 21st April, 1917.)

Action of H.M.S. "Pargust" on the 7th June, 1917

On the 7th June, 1917, while disguised as a British merchant vessel with a dummy gun mounted aft, H.M.S. *Pargust* was torpedoed at very close range. Her boiler-room, engine-room, and No. 5 hold were immediately flooded, and the starboard lifeboat was blown to pieces. The weather was misty at the time, fresh breeze, and a choppy sea. The "panic party," under the command of Lieutenant F. R. Hereford, D.S.C., R.N.R., abandoned ship, and as the last boat was shoving off, the periscope of the submarine was observed close before the port beam about 400 yards distant. The enemy then submerged, and his periscope reappeared directly astern, passing to the starboard quarter, and then round to the port beam, when it

turned again towards the ship, breaking surface about 50 yards away. The lifeboat, acting as a lure, commenced to pull round the stern, submarine followed closely ; and Lieutenant Hereford, with complete disregard of the danger incurred from fire of either ship or submarine (who had trained a Maxim on the lifeboat) continued to decoy her to within 50 yards of the ship. The *Pargust* then opened fire with all guns, and the submarine, with oil squirting from her side and the crew pouring out of the conning tower, steamed slowly across the bows with a heavy list. The enemy crew held up their hands in token of surrender, whereupon fire immediately ceased. The submarine then began to move away at a gradually increasing speed, apparently endeavouring to escape in the mist. Fire was reopened until she sank, one man clinging to the bow as she went down. The boats, after a severe pull to windward, succeeded in saving one officer and one man. American destroyers and a British sloop arrived shortly afterwards, and the *Pargust* was towed back to port. As on the previous occasions, officers and men displayed the utmost courage and confidence in their Captain, and the action serves as an example of what perfect discipline, when coupled with such confidence, can achieve.

(The award of the Victoria Cross to Lieutenant Ronald Neil Stuart, D.S.O., R.N.R., and Seaman William Williams, R.N.R., O.N., 6224A., was announced in the *London Gazette* No. 30194, dated the 20th July, 1917.)

Action of H.M.S. " Dunraven " on the 8th August, 1917.

On the 8th August, 1917, H.M.S. *Dunraven*, under the command of Captain Gordon Campbell, V.C., D.S.O., R.N., sighted an enemy submarine on the horizon. In her rôle of armed British merchant ship, the *Dunraven* continued her zigzag course, whereupon the submarine closed, remaining submerged to within 5,000 yards, and then, rising to the surface, opened fire. The *Dunraven* returned the fire with

her merchant-ship gun, at the same time reducing speed to enable the enemy to overtake her. Wireless signals were also sent out for the benefit of the submarine: "Help! come quickly—submarine chasing and shelling me." Finally, when the shells began falling close, the *Dunraven* stopped and abandoned ship by the "panic party." The ship was then being heavily shelled, and on fire aft. In the meantime the submarine closed to 400 yards distant, partly obscured from view by the dense clouds of smoke issuing from the *Dunraven's* stern. Despite the knowledge that the after-magazine must inevitably explode if he waited, and further, that a gun and gun's crew lay concealed over the magazine, Captain Campbell decided to reserve his fire until the submarine had passed clear of the smoke. A moment later, however, a heavy explosion occurred aft, blowing the gun and gun's crew into the air, and accidentally starting the fire-gongs at the remaining gun positions; screens were immediately dropped, and the only gun that would bear opened fire, but the submarine, apparently frightened by the explosion, had already commenced to submerge. Realising that a torpedo must inevitably follow, Captain Campbell ordered the surgeon to remove all wounded and conceal them in cabins; hoses were also turned on the poop, which was a mass of flames. A signal was sent out warning men-of-war to divert all traffic below the horizon in order that nothing should interrupt the final phase of the action. Twenty minutes later a torpedo again struck the ship abaft the engine-room. An additional party of men were again sent away as a "panic party" and left the ship to outward appearances completely abandoned, with the White Ensign flying and guns unmasked. For the succeeding fifty minutes the submarine examined the ship through her periscope. During this period boxes of cordite and shells exploded every few minutes, and the fire on the poop still blazed furiously. Captain Campbell and the handful of officers and men who

remained on board lay hidden during this ordeal. The submarine then rose to the surface astern, where no guns could bear, and shelled the ship closely for twenty minutes. The enemy then submerged and steamed past the ship 150 yards off, examining her through the periscope. Captain Campbell decided then to fire one of his torpedoes, but missed by a few inches. The submarine crossed the bows and came slowly down the other side, whereupon a second torpedo was fired and missed again. The enemy observed it and immediately submerged. Urgent signals for assistance were immediately sent out, but pending arrival of assistance Captain Campbell arranged for a third " panic party " to jump overboard if necessary and leave one gun's crew on board for a final attempt to destroy the enemy, should he again attack. Almost immediately afterwards, however, British and American destroyers arrived on the scene, the wounded were transferred, boats were recalled, and the fire extinguished. The *Dunraven*, although her stern was awash, was taken in tow, but the weather grew worse, and early the following morning she sank with colours flying.

(The award of the Victoria Cross to Lieutenant Charles George Bonner, D.S.C., R.N.R., and Petty Officer Ernest Pitcher, O.N. 227029, Po., was announced in the *London Gazette* No. 30363, dated the 2nd November, 1917.)